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The right to food

Note by the Secretary-General**

The Secretary-General has the honour to transmit to the General Assembly the interim report of the Special Rapporteur on the right to food, Jean Ziegler, submitted in accordance with General Assembly resolution 61/163.

* A/62/150.
** This report is submitted late in order to contain as much updated information as possible.

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Report of the Special Rapporteur on the right to food

Summary

The Special Rapporteur on the right to food is gravely concerned to report to the General Assembly that global levels of hunger continue to rise. The number of people suffering from hunger has increased to 854 million people and has been rising every year since 1996. Virtually no progress has been made on reducing hunger, despite the commitments made by Governments in 1996 at the first World Food Summit and again at the Millennium Summit in 2000. More than 6 million children still die every year from hunger and hunger-related causes before their fifth birthday. This is unacceptable. All human beings have the right to live in dignity, free from hunger. The right to adequate food is a human right.

In the present report, the Special Rapporteur calls the attention of the General Assembly to situations of special concern relating to the right to food, as well as to positive initiatives of Governments to combat hunger. The Special Rapporteur also calls the attention of the General Assembly to two emerging issues: the first is the issue of the potentially grave negative impact of biofuels (or agrofuels) on the right to food. The second is the urgent need to improve protection for people who are fleeing from hunger, famine and starvation in their countries of origin and face numerous human rights violations if they try to cross borders into developed countries.

The Special Rapporteur is gravely concerned that biofuels will bring hunger in their wake. The sudden, ill-conceived, rush to convert food — such as maize, wheat, sugar and palm oil — into fuels is a recipe for disaster. There are serious risks of creating a battle between food and fuel that will leave the poor and hungry in developing countries at the mercy of rapidly rising prices for food, land and water. If agro-industrial methods are pursued to turn food into fuel, then there are risks that unemployment and violations of the right to food may result, unless specific measures are put in place to ensure that biofuels contribute to the development of small-scale peasant and family farming. Instead of using food crops, biofuels should be made from non-food plants and agricultural wastes, reducing competition for food, land and water.

The Special Rapporteur is also gravely concerned about the abuses suffered by the many migrants fleeing hunger, famine and starvation in their own countries, who are treated as little more than criminals if they attempt to cross borders into developed countries. The Special Rapporteur calls the Assembly's attention to the tens of thousands of people who every year risk their lives to flee hunger and continue to be deported back to their countries of origin, even if their lives will be again at risk from hunger and famine. It is time for national and international protection mechanisms to be strengthened, as only then will Governments take seriously their obligations to respect, protect and fulfil the right to food of all human beings around the world.

The report ends with a series of recommendations for Governments on the realization of the right to food.

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I. Introduction

1. The Special Rapporteur on the right to food hereby submits his seventh report to the General Assembly, as requested by the Assembly in its resolution 61/163.

2. The Special Rapporteur is outraged to report that global hunger is still on the rise. According to the latest report of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) on the *State of Food Insecurity in the World 2006*, there has been virtually no progress made on reducing hunger, despite the commitments made by Governments at the first World Food Summit in 1996 and again at the Millennium Summit in 2000. While in 1996 the number of people suffering from undernourishment was estimated to be about 800 million people, the latest Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations estimate suggests that there are now 854 million people who do not get enough to eat every day. Every year, more than six million children still die from hunger-related illness before their fifth birthday.

3. This is unacceptable. In a world that is richer than ever before, more people than ever continue to suffer from malnutrition, hunger and starvation. The world can produce enough food to feed twice the entire global population, yet millions go to bed hungry at night. Millions of children still go without adequate food each day, without sufficient macro and micronutrients, and are condemned to stunted physical growth and stunted intellectual development.

4. In a world overflowing with riches, hunger is not inevitable. It is a violation of human rights. The right to food is a human right that protects the right of all human beings to live in dignity, free from hunger. The Special Rapporteur defines the right to food as:

> The right to have regular, permanent and unrestricted access, either directly or by means of financial purchases, to quantitatively and qualitatively adequate and sufficient food corresponding to the cultural traditions of the people to which the consumer belongs, and which ensures a physical and mental, individual and collective, fulfilling and dignified life free of fear.

Activities of the Special Rapporteur

5. In his work over the past year, the Special Rapporteur has continued to promote the right to food among Governments, United Nations agencies and non-governmental organizations around the world. This has included country missions. The Special Rapporteur visited Bolivia from 29 April to 6 May 2007 and submitted a preliminary note on his visit to the Human Rights Council at its fifth session in June 2007 (A/HRC/4/30/Add.2). During the first half of 2007, the Special Rapporteur also received invitations to visit Madagascar and Cuba, which he hopes to take up before the end of the year.

6. As part of his mandate, the Special Rapporteur is also required to receive and respond to information on the right to food and all aspects of the realization of this right. During the reporting period, the Special Rapporteur has therefore sent 63 communications to Governments, requesting further information on specific allegations of violations of the right to food that he has received. A report on all communications sent in 2006 was submitted to the Human Rights Council (A/HRC/4/30/Add.1). A report on all communications sent during 2007 will be

submitted as an addendum to the next report of the Special Rapporteur to the Council.

7. The Special Rapporteur has also continued to work closely with Governments and Parliaments for the promotion of the right to food. On 14 July 2006, he attended an international conference in Rome, "Food Insecurity and the Right to Food", hosted by the Mayor of Rome, Walter Veltroni, and organized in collaboration with the University of Florence and the Unidea-Unicredit Foundation.

8. He has also continued to work closely with United Nations agencies, particularly the World Food Programme (WFP) and FAO. The Special Rapporteur welcomes the fact that on the eve of the commemoration of the sixtieth anniversary of the proclamation by the United Nations of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the theme of World Food Day, to be celebrated worldwide on 16 October 2007, will be the right to food. Activities to promote the right to food are being planned in over 150 countries.

9. In order to protect the right to food of children, the Special Rapporteur has followed the work of the United Nations System Standing Committee on Nutrition on the issue of malnutrition, but also on the issue of obesity, particularly in children, and its related problems.[1] He is particularly concerned about corporate marketing practices and corporate lobbying that are contributing directly both to forms of malnutrition and forms of obesity. He believes that Governments and civil society should make all possible efforts to counteract industry lobbying, which has increasingly become stronger in those forums where standards aimed at contributing to the protection of the right to food are discussed and adopted.

10. At the same time, the Special Rapporteur has continued to work with social movements and NGOs involved in human rights and development. He delivered the keynote speech on "eradication of poverty and hunger" at the Civil Society Development Forum 2007 "A Platform for Development: Countdown to 2015", held in Geneva from 28 to 30 June 2007. This forum was organized just prior to the Annual Ministerial Review of the Economic and Social Council, held from 2 to 4 July 2007, which focused on taking stock of the various efforts to eradicate poverty and hunger and achieve Millennium Development Goal 1. The Special Rapporteur has also continued to follow the important work of non-governmental organizations around the world to promote respect of the right to food.

11. The Special Rapporteur continued his close collaboration with academia on issues relevant to the right to food. In November 2006, his team participated at a seminar on "Human rights in the fight against extreme poverty", held in Barcelona and organized by the Fundación la Caixa and the Centre of International Studies of the University of Barcelona.

[1] The Standing Committee on Nutrition, at its 34th session, held from 26 February to 1 March 2007, urged the Special Rapporteur to address issues relating to the double burden of malnutrition.

II. Recent developments with respect to the right to food

A. Positive developments

Horn of Africa

12. The Special Rapporteur has been carefully following the frequent crises of hunger in the Horn of Africa. He welcomes the initiative of six African Governments and the United Nations to establish a road map to tackle the root causes of rising hunger across this region.[2] The multiple causes of food insecurity in the Horn of Africa will be addressed through initiatives to improve food security and increase protection of the right to food of the populations there.[3] The Special Rapporteur calls upon all the actors involved to begin swift implementation of the road map, building on the rich experience available in this region.

Bolivia

13. During his official mission to Bolivia from 29 April to 6 May 2007, the Special Rapporteur observed important positive developments with respect to the realization of the right to food. The Government is taking action to address malnutrition. One quarter of all Bolivian children, mostly indigenous children, are gravely undernourished. The Government's Zero Malnutrition programme could serve as an example to the rest of the world. Resources gained from increasing taxes on the exploitation of Bolivia's oil and gas reserves will go directly towards the Zero Malnutrition programme. New programmes are also being elaborated, focusing on investing in small-scale agriculture, agrarian reforms, the elimination of the persistent slavery of bonded labour and the restitution of lands to indigenous communities.

Peru

14. The Special Rapporteur welcomes an important proposal for the elaboration in Peru of a new law on food security and the realization of the right to food. This proposal was presented to the Peruvian Congress on 15 June 2007. Given that one quarter of young children in Peru suffer from chronic malnutrition, this law will establish a normative basis for the Government's Food Security Policy, clarifying roles and responsibilities concerning the implementation of the right to food and increasing the accountability of the Government to meet its obligations towards the right to food.

Latin America and the Caribbean

15. The Special Rapporteur welcomes the dynamism of the Latin American and Caribbean region in general, and particularly the adoption of the regional initiative to eradicate hunger and guarantee food security under the "Iniciativa América Latina y Caribe sin Hambre". This initiative makes the realization of the right to adequate food for all and at all levels a key priority in the region.

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[2] IRIN, "Governments, United Nations agree on 'road map' to tackle hunger in Africa", 26 June 2007.

[3] Horn of Africa Consultations on Food Security, "Executive summary of country reports for discussion at the multi-country consultation, Nairobi, Kenya, 25-26 June 2007".

B. Situations of special concern

Southern Africa

16. The Special Rapporteur is deeply concerned about the food crises that currently threaten the lives of millions of people across southern Africa. In Lesotho, over 400,000 of the country's population of 1.9 million people face food shortages and are struggling to meet their basic food needs owing to the country's most severe drought in 30 years. As a result the Government has declared a state of emergency and appealed for international assistance.[4] For a population who mostly live on less than US$ 2 per day, exorbitant maize prices have exhausted the coping capacities of many households.[5] In Swaziland, one third of the population is without food after the worst annual maize harvest on record, due to an extended dry spell and high temperatures. This has led to surges in maize prices and reductions in the availability of food, which have affected people's access to food, particularly among the poorest of the poor who live on less than $1 per day.[6] In Zimbabwe, widespread crop failures caused by poor rainfall have exacerbated the economic crisis and have drastically limited access to food for the poorest. A recent FAO/WFP assessment confirmed that an estimated 2.1 million people will require food aid by September 2007 and this number could double by early 2008.

17. The Special Rapporteur is particularly concerned that funding shortfalls are forcing WFP to cut operations across the region. In Zambia, WFP may cut food assistance to 500,000 vulnerable children, widows, orphans and HIV/AIDS patients.[7] In Namibia in January 2007, WFP cut rations to 90,000 orphans and vulnerable children, jeopardizing their access to sufficient food at an age when realizing their right to food is crucial to children's healthy development.[8]

Economic partnership agreements between the African, Caribbean and Pacific countries and the European Union

18. The Special Rapporteur is very concerned about the terms of new agreements being negotiated by the European Union (EU) under new economic partnership agreements with the African, Caribbean and Pacific countries. He would like to draw the urgent attention of all States, particularly members of the EU, to the implications that this may have on the right to food of poor farmers in the developing world. He is particularly concerned about the potential negative impact of greater trade liberalization on peasant farmers in the African, Caribbean and Pacific countries, especially given unfair competition with highly subsidized EU production.[9] In these countries, where up to 80 per cent of the population can be involved in peasant agriculture, unfair competition may push millions of African, Caribbean and Pacific peoples out of agriculture, when there are few other employment options. In addition, the new economic partnership agreements are

[4] IRIN, "Lesotho: Hungry for assistance", 18 July 2007.

[5] FAO and WFP, "Special report: crop and food supply assessment mission to Lesotho", 12 June 2007.

[6] ReliefWeb, "FAO/WFP Crop and food supply assessment mission to Swaziland", 23 May 2007.

[7] *UN News*, "Critical funding shortfall threatens United Nations food lifeline for 500,000 Zambians", 27 February 2007.

[8] IRIN, "Namibia: WFP cuts rations for orphans", 12 January 2007.

[9] See, for example, *Fédération internationale des ligues des droits de l'homme*, Position paper, "Economic partnership agreements (EPA) and human rights", June 2007.

likely to lead to loss of substantial revenue for African, Caribbean and Pacific Governments, which are mostly heavily dependent on import taxes to raise Government revenue.[10] The World Bank, for example, estimates that in sub-Saharan Africa tariff revenues average between 7 and 10 per cent of Government revenue. Eliminating tariffs on EU imports would lower tariff revenues considerably, forcing these countries to cut fiscal expenditure and therefore putting social programmes at risk and affecting Governments' ability to meet their obligations towards economic, social and cultural rights, including the right to food.

III. The impact of biofuels on the right to food

19. Under his mandate, as defined by the Commission on Human Rights, the Special Rapporteur is charged with identifying "emerging issues related to the right to food worldwide" (resolution 2000/10, para. 10 (c)).

20. The present section contains a preliminary examination of an emerging issue that has the potential to threaten the realization of the right to food: global plans to increase rapidly the production of "biofuels" or what is termed by many environmental and social organizations in developing countries, "agrofuels."[11] During his dialogue with Governments at the session of the Human Rights Council in June 2007, the Special Rapporteur was requested to examine urgently the impact of agrofuels on the realization of the right to food. The Special Rapporteur has also received repeated appeals from non-governmental organizations to examine in his reports the impact of these new fuels on hunger and food security.

21. Rushing to turn food crops — maize, wheat, sugar, palm oil — into fuel for cars, without first examining the impact on global hunger is a recipe for disaster. It is estimated that to fill one car tank with biofuel (about 50 litres) would require about 200 kg of maize — enough to feed one person for one year.[12]

22. Already, the new Executive Director of the World Food Programme, Josette Sheeran, has cited new obstacles for the organization, including climate change, soaring commodity prices, caused partly by the rapid growth of major countries like China and India, commodity costs and rising demand for biofuels, which in turn is pushing up global grain prices.[13]

23. The President of the State Council of the Republic of Cuba, Fidel Castro Ruiz, has warned that it is a "sinister idea to transform food into fuel".[14] Lester Brown from the Earth Policy Institute, briefing the United States Senate in June 2006 suggested that, "the stage is now set for direct competition for grain between the 800 million people who own automobiles, and the world's 2 billion poorest people".[15] Increasingly unconvinced of the positive net impact of the production of agrofuels on carbon dioxide emissions, non-governmental organizations have started

[10] Oxfam Briefing Note, "Unequal Partners: how EU-ACP economic partnership agreements (EPAs) could harm the development prospects of many of the world's poorest countries", September 2006.

[11] See para. 24 below and E. Holt-Giménez, "The biofuel myths", *International Herald Tribune*, 10 July 2007.

[12] G. Gendron, Radio Canada, 12 August 2007.

[13] *UN Special*, July 2007, Invité du mois, "Let us make hunger a part of history".

[14] Fidel Castro Ruiz, *Granma*, 27 March 2007.

[15] Cited in Daniel Howden, "The fight for the world's food" in *The Independent*, 23 June 2007.

to call for a global moratorium on the expansion of agrofuels until the potential social, environmental and human rights impacts can be fully examined and appropriate regulatory structures put in place to prevent or mitigate any negative impacts.[16]

24. The sudden explosion of interest in agrofuels is evident in massive increases in investment and the setting of ambitious renewable-fuel targets across the Western countries. The European Union now requires that agrofuels provide 5.75 per cent of member States' transport power by 2010 and 10 per cent by 2020.[17] The United States has set targets to increase usage of agrofuel for energy to 35 billion gallons per year. The President of the United States, George W. Bush, and the President of Brazil, Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, signed an agreement in March 2007 committing those two countries to increase their ethanol production. But why are agrofuels so suddenly being promoted? One answer is that Governments are finally waking up to the need to do something about global warming and climate change. Another answer is that Governments see the need to reduce dependence on oil for strategic reasons in the current war on terror. In his 2007 State of the Union message, President Bush was explicit about this goal: "It's in our vital interest to diversify America's energy supply ... Let us build on the work we've done and reduce gasoline usage in the United States by 20 per cent in the next 10 years. When we do that we will have cut our total imports by the equivalent of three quarters of all the oil we now import from the Middle East."[18] Garten Rothkopf, author of a new report commissioned by the Inter-American Development Bank, *Blueprint for Green Energy in the Americas*, has argued that Latin America will be the new Middle East: "Latin America will be the Persian Gulf of biofuels, except that of course Latin America is much more stable as a source of energy."[19] Another reason is pressure from the agro-industrial interests that will benefit from a rapid expansion in the production of agrofuels. As oil prices rise, it becomes more viable to invest in alternative energies, the "green gold" of biofuels.

25. In the present section, the Special Rapporteur uses the term "agrofuels" interchangeably with the more commonly used expression of "biofuels". Using the term "agrofuels" highlights how the interests of the agro-industrial monopolies will dominate over the interests of the world's poor and hungry, especially in the developing world. As E. Holt-Giménez of Food First has argued, the myths of the green and pure image of "biofuel" are being used to "obscure the political-economic relationships between land, people's resources and food, and fail to help us to understand the profound consequences of the industrial transformation of our food and fuel systems".[20]

26. If there are not conscious efforts to ensure that producing biofuels does not bring greater hunger in its wake, then the poor and hungry will be the victims of these new fuels.

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[16] See E. Holt-Giménez, "The biofuel myths", *International Herald Tribune*, 10 July 2007.

[17] Directive 2003/30/EC on the promotion of the use of biofuels or other renewable fuels for transport.

[18] Address to the United States Congress on 23 January 2007.

[19] Cited in Marcela Sanchez, "Latin America — the 'Persian Gulf' of biofuels?", *Washington Post*, 23 February 2007.

[20] E. Holt-Giménez, "The biofuel myths", *International Herald Tribune*, 10 July 2007.

A. Agrofuel

27. The two main types of agrofuel are bioethanol and biodiesel. Both are produced from a variety of food crops. Bioethanol is produced from sweet and starchy crops, which can be fermented to produce alcohol — mostly sugar cane and maize, but also sugar beet, potatoes, wheat or even manioc (the staple food of many African nations). Biodiesel is produced from vegetable oils by reaction of the oil with methanol.[21] The oils used are mostly from soya, palm or rapeseed, but also from peanuts, coconuts and many other oil-rich plants. P. Garde in his study on biofuels in Senegal points out that most of the plants used for agrofuels are food products and form the basic staple foods of millions of people in the poorest regions of the world, including in Africa, where food security is already seriously in peril.[22]

28. These food crops can be directly converted into energy and can be used to fuel cars and other transport. Up to 10 per cent of bioethanol can be mixed into normal petrol and can run in any car. Cars with specialized engines can also run on 100 per cent bioethanol, although so far Brazil is the only country to have made substantive progress with these cars. Biodiesel can also be blended directly into standard diesel and can be used by standard diesel engine cars. Adding between 5 and 10 per cent of biofuel to petrol and diesel can simply replace additives that oil companies normally add to improve combustion. Current forecasts therefore suggest that biofuels will account for less than 5 per cent of total transport fuel use in 2010. "Because most liquid biofuels will be consumed as blends with gasoline or petroleum diesel, biofuels will for some time to come be complements to petroleum-based transport fuels, not major competitors with them", the Director of Research of the Global Subsidies Initiative, Ronald Steenblik, has observed.[23] This means that, so far, oil companies do not feel threatened by the shift towards agrofuels. On the contrary, the global corporate monopolies of oil, grain, cars and biotechnology are rushing to consolidate partnerships: Archer Daniels Midland Company (ADM) with Monsanto, Chevron with Volkswagen, BP and DuPont with Toyota.[24]

29. Global production of agrofuels is currently dominated by one continent (the Americas) and one type of fuel (bioethanol). This bioethanol is produced mostly from maize (in the United States) or sugar cane (in Brazil).[25] The United States has doubled its production of bioethanol over the past five years and has now overtaken Brazil as the dominant producer. Brazil, which produced over 12 million tons of ethanol in 2006, much of it for the domestic market, plans to become a dominant producer for the global market by 2025.[26] By contrast, Europe's production of ethanol, at 3.5 million tons, is still relatively low. However, Europe dominates the production of biodiesel, using rapeseed oil and palm oil predominantly imported from India and Malaysia, although biodiesel production remains one tenth of total

[21] See Leo Peskett, Rachel Slater and others, "Biofuels, agriculture and poverty reduction" in *Natural Resource Perspectives* 107, Overseas Development Institute, June 2007.

[22] P. Garde, Les biocarburants au Sénégal comme outil de développement: oasis ou mirage, 2007.

[23] www.globalsubsidies.org/article.php3?id_article=6.

[24] E. Holt-Giménez, 2007.

[25] Institut nationale de la recherche agronomique.

[26] Georges Dupuy "La nouvelle bataille des champs", *L'Express*, 19 April 2007.

ethanol production.[27] Other than Brazil, few developing countries produce significant amounts, but China, Colombia, India and Thailand have started production. So far, production is focused on food crops in the "first generation" of agrofuels and there has been little production and investment in what are known as "second-generation" cellulose-based fuels which could convert non-food crops and agricultural wastes (for example, the fibrous stalks of wheat) for production.

30. Global consumption of agrofuels is low, but will rise rapidly under targets set in the European Union, the United States and Latin America. The European Union has set targets requiring that agrofuels provide up to 10 per cent of transport fuels by 2020.[17] The United States has also set targets to increase the use of agrofuel. But the target objectives cannot be met by agricultural production in the industrialized countries. It has been estimated that Europe would have to devote 70 per cent of its arable lands to agrofuel production to meet these objectives and the United States would have to convert its entire production of maize and soya into ethanol and biodiesel.

31. Therefore, the industrialized countries of the North are very interested in the production of the countries of the southern hemisphere to meet these needs.[28] According to FIAN International, the United States and the European Union are heavily dependent on imports from Latin America of soya, sugar cane and palm oil, some African countries, such as Nigeria, Cameroon, Ivory Coast and Ghana, for palm oil and Asian countries, including India, Indonesia and Malaysia, which are the main palm oil producers. Such production is also much cheaper in developing countries. For example, it is much cheaper to produce a litre of ethanol in Brazil (15 Euro cents) than in the United States (30 Euro cents) or Europe (50 Euro cents).[29]

B. The impact of biofuels on the right to food

32. The Special Rapporteur is charged with bringing to the attention of the United Nations emerging issues that may affect the right to food. The right to adequate food entails that all people have physical and economic access at all times to sufficient nutritionally adequate food. The right to adequate food also places obligations on Governments to respect, protect and fulfil the right to food, ensuring that food and nutrition security improves over time and that there are no direct violations of people's physical and economic access to sufficient food to maintain a dignified life.

33. Increasing the production of biofuels could bring positive benefits for climate change and for farmers in developing countries, including by improving food security, if the benefits trickle down. However, it is also important to examine the potential of biofuels to threaten the realization of the right to food. It is unacceptable that increasing production of biofuels should lead to greater hunger. The greatest risk is that dependence on the agro-industrial model of production will fail to benefit poor peasant farmers and will generate violations of the right to food. As the Brazilian Landless Workers' Movement argues, "the current model of

[27] United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), "Challenges and opportunities for developing countries in producing biofuels" (UNCTAD/DITC/COM/2006/15), 27 November 2006.

[28] "Biocarburants: l'arnaque", No. 864, *Courrier international*.

[29] Ibid., p. 13.

production for bio-energy is sustained by the same elements that have always been the cause of the oppression of our peoples" — the appropriation of land, concentration of ownership and the exploitation of the labour force.[30]

34. In this preliminary analysis, the Special Rapporteur highlights a number of key concerns.

Increasing food prices

35. The prices of basic staple foods are likely to increase, threatening economic access to sufficient food, particularly for the poorest who already spend a high proportion of their incomes on food. The well-regarded think tank, International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI), has estimated that prices will rise dramatically in the near future if the production of biofuels is increased. It is estimated that there could be a rise of 20 per cent in the international price of maize between now and 2010, and 41 per cent by 2020. The prices of vegetable oil crops, especially soya and sunflower seeds could increase by 26 per cent by 2010 and 76 per cent by 2020, and wheat prices could increase by 11 per cent and then by 30 per cent. In the poorest regions of sub-Saharan Africa, Asia and Latin America, the price of manioc could rise by 33 per cent and up to 135 per cent by 2020.[31] IFPRI believes that this will set up a battle of "food versus fuel", unless there are urgent investments in moving to the second generation of biofuels that will not depend so much on food products. The consequences of such a rapid increase in food prices would be grave. IFPRI projects that the number of people suffering from undernourishment would increase by 16 million people for each percentage point increase in the real price of staple food. This could mean that 1.2 billion people would be suffering from hunger by 2025.

36. There are already reports that the global maize price has doubled over the past year.[32] Vast swathes of edible maize varieties have been replaced by industrial maize. There are serious concerns that, as the United States produces more than two thirds of the world's grain imports, the diversion of maize to ethanol distilleries will have a huge impact on global prices and availability, including for food aid. Mexico faced food riots in February 2007 after the price of maize tortillas rose by over 400 per cent in January 2007, severely affecting the poorest for whom the basic staple tortilla makes up 45 per cent of family expenses.[33] Although Mexico was traditionally a net exporter of maize, it has become a net importer because of so-called "free-trade" agreements, which have opened up Mexican markets to unfair competition with the dumping of subsidized maize exports from the United States and have displaced Mexican production. There are therefore serious risks for all developing countries that are net importers of basic staple foods.

37. Although increasing food prices should theoretically benefit millions of people working as peasant farmers in developing countries, this is not always the case. Many farming families are net buyers of staple foods, as they do not have enough

[30] Movimento dos Trabaladores Rurais Sim Terra (MST), "Full tanks at the cost of empty stomachs: the expansion of the sugarcane industry in Latin America", 28 February 2007, www.mstbrazil.org/?q=sugarcaneindustrybrazillatinamericamstanalysis2007.

[31] Mark W. Rosegrant and others, "Biofuels and the global food balance", *Bioenergy and Agriculture: Promises and Challenges*, Peter Hazell and P. K. Pachauri, eds. (IFPRI, 2006).

[32] Daniel Howden, "The fight for the world's food", *The Independent*, 23 June 2007.

[33] http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/americas/6319093.stm.

land to be self-sufficient, and will therefore be affected by rising consumer prices. In addition, prices received by farmers at the farm gate are often exploitatively low, particularly for remote farmers with little choice of whom to sell their crops to, and often do not reflect global prices because of the greed of intermediaries. If increased agricultural production is to benefit poor peasant farmers, it will be essential to build mechanisms, such as cooperatives and non-exploitative out-grower schemes, that would ensure a trickle-down to the poorest.

Increasing competition over land and forests, and forced evictions

38. A rapid increase in the prices of food crops will intensify competition over land and other natural resources, including forest reserves. This will pit peasant farmers and indigenous communities of forest dwellers against massive agribusiness corporations and large investors who are already buying up large swathes of land or forcing peasants off their land. The Belgian human rights organization Human Rights Everywhere (HREV) has already documented forced evictions, the appropriation of land and other violations of human rights in the palm oil plantations in Colombia, documenting responsibilities of all the actors along the production chain.[34] Forced evictions constitute clear violations of the obligations to respect and protect people's existing access to food, and all corporations involved in the production of biofuels should avoid complicity in these violations.

39. Lessons must be learned from the more recent expansion of soya production across Latin America, which has contributed to the deforestation of vast swathes of the Amazonian basin and has resulted in the forcible eviction of many peasants and indigenous peoples from their lands. The non-governmental organization FIAN International has documented the complicity of agroindustrial corporations, large landowners and security forces in forced evictions in Brazil, Colombia, Argentina, Paraguay and Indonesia. In some cases, agribusiness companies urge peasants to sell their land, in others the companies occupy land without informing the communities who have been living there for decades. In Paraguay, where the area planted with soya has more than doubled since the 1990s (mainly in the regions of Itapúa, Alto Paraná and Canindeyú), many indigenous communities do not possess land titles and have been forcibly evicted. Houses, crops and animals were burned in the community of the Tetaguá Guarani, in the Primero de Marzo peasant camp and in the community of María Antonia. It is estimated that 350 similar cases occurred in Paraguay between 1990 and 2004. In Argentina, peasants and indigenous families have been evicted from their land in the provinces of Córdoba, Santiago del Estero, Salta, Mendoza, Misiones and Jujuy. Villagers in the province of Santiago del Estero have been systematically threatened by soya agribusiness, by the paramilitaries paid to protect it, and by the state police. In the Colombian region of Chocó, communities of indigenous people and people of African descent have been evicted from their land after oil palm growing companies occupied the land. Similar cases have been recorded in Indonesia and Cameroon.

Employment and conditions of work

40. Although the increase in agrofuel production could offer better employment, MST in Brazil has already protested the "slavery" conditions faced by workers on

[34] Fidel Mingorance, *The Flow of Palm Oil: Colombia-Belgium/Europe; A Study from a Human Rights Perspective* (HREV, 2007).

the country's sugar-cane plantations. Alexandre Conceicao, a member of the MST national leadership in the northern state of Pernambuco, has warned that "the social cost of this policy is the overexploitation of labour with an army of seasonal workers who cut one ton of sugar cane for 2.50 reals (1.28 dollars) in precarious conditions which have already caused the deaths of hundreds of workers". And Camila Moreno, an expert in agrarian development at the Rural University of Rio de Janeiro, has warned that the growth of the ethanol industry is breathing life into "a modern-day version of the sugar plantation slave-labour past".[35]

41. Although promises are being made that the production of biofuels will provide more jobs,[36] there are risks that, given competition over land with peasant farmers, biofuel production may result in greater unemployment. In Brazil, it is estimated that 100 hectares dedicated to family farming generate at least 35 jobs, while 100 hectares dedicated to industrial farming of sugar cane and oil palm plantations provide only 10 jobs, and of soybeans half a job.[37] If industrial farming takes over land formerly dedicated to family farming, the net effect will be fewer jobs. The possibilities for agrarian reform to increase access to land for landless families may also be halted. Biofuels can, however, be produced by non-industrial family farming that provides more employment: in Brazil, 30 per cent of sugar cane production is in the hands of 60,000 small producers.

Increasing prices and scarcity of water

42. The production of biofuels will require substantial amounts of water, diverting water away from the production of food crops. So far, few substantive studies have been undertaken to examine the impact of biofuel production on water resources and reflect the true environmental and social costs, although this was a central concern of the World Water Week international meeting held in Stockholm in August 2006. Rising prices of water would limit access to water for the poorest communities, in ways that would negatively affect the right to food.

C. Protecting the right to food in biofuel production

43. Rather than persuading us to use less energy, the false promise of agrofuels suggests that we can help the climate by simply changing fuels. Yet many studies have shown that agrofuels may not even be "carbon-neutral" or make much contribution to setting off carbon dioxide emissions, once account is taken of the fossil fuels that are still needed to plant, harvest and process food crops for biofuels under highly mechanized industrial models of production. Agrofuel production is unacceptable if it brings greater hunger and water scarcity to the poor in developing countries.

44. The Special Rapporteur therefore calls for a five-year moratorium on biofuel production using current methods, to allow time for technologies to be devised and regulatory structures to be put in place to protect against negative environmental, social and human rights impacts. Many measures can be put in place during such a

[35] http://ipsnews.net/news.asp?idnews=38051

[36] A. J. Ferriera Simões, "Biofuels will help fight hunger", *International Herald Tribune*, 6 August 2007.

[37] E. Holt-Giménez, "The biofuel myths", *International Herald Tribune*, 10 July 2007.

moratorium to ensure that biofuel production can have positive impacts and respect the right to adequate food. Such measures include:

(a) Promoting the need to reduce overall energy consumption and maintaining focus on all other methods of improving energy efficiency;

(b) Moving immediately to "second generation" technologies for producing biofuels, which would reduce the competition between food and fuel. Agricultural wastes and crop residues could be used. As IFPRI has pointed out: "the efficient exploitation of agricultural wastes presents significant potential for developing bio-energy without unduly disrupting existing agricultural practices and food production or requiring new land to come into production".[32] Common crop residues that can be used include maize cobs, sugar cane bagasse, rice husks and banana leaves. In this way, biofuel production could be complementary to existing agriculture, rather than competing with it, and would not require massive diversion of food, land and water resources away from food production. Food prices would therefore remain stable, but farmers would have profitable ways of disposing of agricultural waste products, benefiting both consumers and producers;

(c) Adopting technologies that use non-food crops, particularly crops that can be grown in semi-arid and arid regions. The cultivation of Jatropha Curcas, a shrub that produces large oil-bearing seeds, appears to offer a good solution as it can be grown in arid lands that are not normally suitable for food crops. Over half of Africa's arid lands are considered suitable for Jatropha cultivation and cultivating this plant would not only produce biofuel but could simultaneously provide livelihoods for African farmers, increase the productivity of the soil and reverse land degradation and desertification;

(d) Ensuring that biofuel production is based on family agriculture, rather than industrial models of agriculture, in order to ensure more employment and rural development that provides opportunities, rather than competition, to poor peasant farmers. Organizing cooperatives of small farmers to grow crops for larger processing firms would provide much more employment than the concentration of land into heavily mechanized expanses and plantations. As ActionAid has pointed out "Biofuel could even be an important tool to fight hunger and poverty if it comes together with a set of appropriate policies involving smallholder farmers."[38]

IV. Protection gaps for people fleeing from hunger

45. In many regions of the world, particularly in Africa, famine, destitution and chronic hunger are forcing people to leave their homes, lands and even their countries. For example, tens of thousands of young Africans flee their countries, risking their lives to try to reach Europe every year. Yet the international community does still not see hunger and violations of the human right to food as good enough reasons or sufficient legal grounds for people to flee their country and receive protection in another. Today, most Governments treat people crossing their borders without permission as criminals, even if they are fleeing from life-threatening consequences of hunger and severe violations of their human right to food. Most are detained and then forcibly repatriated to their countries, even if their lives will be threatened by hunger and famine in the country they are forced to return to. The

[38] www.actionaid.org/pages.aspx?PageID=34&ItemID=287.

Special Rapporteur considers this to be a shame on humanity. As the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights has rightly stated, "there is little to distinguish between a person facing death through starvation and another threatened with arbitrary execution because of her political beliefs".[39]

46. The Special Rapporteur therefore argues in the present section that legal protection must be extended to protect people fleeing from hunger and severe violations of their right to food. He calls for the creation of a new legal instrument to protect people fleeing from hunger and violations of the right to food. Under this new legal instrument, they would be recognized as "refugees from hunger" and granted, at the very minimum, the right of non-refoulement with temporary protection, so that they would not be sent back to a country where hunger and famine threaten their lives. While Governments always bear primary responsibility for respect of the right to food, if people flee their countries for their lives, receiving countries should not send them back to situations of hunger that threaten their lives. The Special Rapporteur believes that the increasing criminalization of migration will simply lead to further violations of the right to life and the right to food. The Special Rapporteur believes that only by recognizing their obligations to the world's refugees from hunger will all Governments finally take seriously their responsibility to eradicate global hunger. This means that rich, developed countries will see that they cannot avoid taking action to eradicate hunger across the world.

Fleeing from hunger

47. Millions of people, especially in sub-Saharan Africa, regularly face hunger, famine and other severe violations of their human right to food. According to FAO, 34 countries around the world are facing food crises in 2007, the majority of them in sub-Saharan Africa.[40] Levels of hunger in sub-Saharan Africa have been constantly increasing since 1990.[41] In the 14 poorest countries, more than 35 per cent of the population goes hungry every day, even during normal times when there is no drought or famine.[41] Hunger has increased most in countries torn apart by conflict during the 1990s, including Burundi, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Liberia and Sierra Leone.[41] These close links between hunger and conflict have often been exacerbated when food and famine have also been used as weapons of war, as in many African countries, against certain groups or communities. Environmental degradation, desertification and global climate change are exacerbating destitution and desperation, especially in the highly arid countries of Sahelian Africa (see A/61/306). The International Panel on Climate Change has estimated that by 2050, there may be as many as 150 million "environmental refugees"[42] — people forced to leave their homes and lands for environmental reasons linked to global climate change, including desertification and land degradation. Policies in developed countries are further exacerbating these effects — energy consumption in the north is contributing to global climate change, with the effects felt primarily in the

[39] Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, Fact Sheet 20, *Human Rights and Refugees*.

[40] www.fao.org/docrep/009/j9247e/j9247e02.htm.

[41] FAO, *The State of World Food Insecurity in the World 2006*.

[42] Joanna Macrae and Anthony Zwi, "Food as an Instrument of War in Contemporary African Famines: A Review of the Evidence", *Disasters*, 16, No. 4, 1991.

south.[43] Most of these people, especially in sub-Saharan Africa, are not choosing to leave, but are being forced to flee. They are, quite literally, "refugees from hunger".

48. The vast majority of people who flee from hunger and famine do not cross international borders, but remain within their own countries, displaced from their places of origin, usually living in the mega-slums of the developing world.[44] But millions of people do cross international borders and some try to reach developed countries to escape pervasive hunger, especially people living in sub-Saharan Africa. It is estimated, for example, that about 2 million such people try to enter the European Union illegally every year and about 2,000 of them drown in the Mediterranean Sea. They try to reach the Canary Islands from Mauritania or Senegal, or to cross the Straits of Gibraltar from Morocco. According to the Government of Spain, 37,685 African migrants reached Spanish shores in 2005. Another 22,824 migrants reached the islands of Italy or Malta, leaving from the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya or Tunisia.[45] They also try to reach Greece through Turkey or leaving from Egypt. During 2006, the Spanish authorities detained at least 28,000 people arriving in the Canary Islands after a dangerous journey across the open sea in overcrowded open fishing boats.[46] Many arrive in a terrible condition, too weak to walk or stand and chronically undernourished. Yet most of them are detained and held in processing or detention centres, before being forcibly repatriated to their own countries.

49. Nobody knows how many thousands of people die while trying to make the journey, but bodies regularly wash up on the beaches or fishermen catch them in their nets.[47] On 18 December 2006, the international press reported that over 100 refugees drowned in one day off the coast of Senegal on their way to Spain.[48] However, nobody is counting. As Markku Niskala, Secretary General of the International Federation of the Red Cross has said: "This crisis is being completely ignored: not only does no one come to the help of these desperate people, but there is no organization that even compiles statistics that record this daily tragedy."[49]

50. If they survive the risks of crossing the seas, they face violence and human rights violations when they reach the shores of developed countries, as came to be highlighted by the outrageous tragedies that occurred in Ceuta and Melilla in 2005. On the night of 28 September 2005, at least five African men were shot dead when law enforcement officials confronted several hundred people trying to enter Spanish territory by climbing over two razor-wire fences separating Ceuta from Morocco.[49]

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[43] Molly Conisbee and Andrew Simms, *Environmental Refugees: The Case for Recongnition*, New Economics Foundation, 2003.

[44] Internally displaced persons are defined as persons who have been forced or obliged to flee or leave their homes or places of habitual residence, in particular as a result of or in order to avoid the effects of armed conflict, situations of generalized violence, violations of human rights or natural or human-made disasters, and who have not crossed an internationally recognized border. Internally displaced persons are protected under human rights instruments and the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement (E/CN.4/1998/53/Add.2, annex). Principle 18 reaffirms the right of internally displaced persons to an adequate standard of living and states that, at minimum, regardless of the circumstances, and without discrimination, competent authorities shall provide internally displaced persons with and ensure safe access to, inter alia, essential food and potable water.

[45] *Tribune de Genève*, 14 December 2006.

[46] BBC News, 30 November 2006 (http://news.bbc.co.uk/go/pr/fr/-/2/hi/europe/6160633.stm).

[47] BBC News, 24 October 2006, http://news.bbc.co.uk/go/pr/fr/-/2/hi/talking_point/5404816.stm.

[48] *Le Courrier*, Geneva, 10 December 2006.

[49] Amnesty International, 3 October 2005, AI Index EUR 41/011/2005 at www.amnesty.org.

On 6 October 2005, another six men were shot dead on the Moroccan side of the border. Amnesty International called for an independent international investigation into these events, as well as into further reports that a number of people had been injured because of ill-treatment and the use of excessive force by Spanish and Moroccan security forces in Ceuta and Melilla.[50] Amnesty International also expressed serious concern about deportations from Spain back to Morocco after Medecins Sans Frontières reported that it had discovered more than 500 people abandoned in the desert on the Moroccan-Algerian border by the Moroccan police without any food or water.[50]

51. This tragedy of African refugees from hunger was a key focus of the World Social Forum on Migration held in Madrid in June 2006, and is also a focus of Africa's own extremely diverse and dynamic civil society, including during the African Social Forum held in Bamako in January 2006 and the World Social Forum held in Nairobi in January 2007. Special days of commemoration of the bloody events at Ceuta and Melilla were focused on the theme of "Globalization and African migration" (29 September to 7 October 2006 at Bamako). In the words of Aminata Traoré:

> The human, financial and technological resources that Europe's 25 countries have deployed against the inflow of African migrants, in fact, signify a real war between this world power and these young, defenceless, rural and urban Africans, whose right to education, right to economic information, right to work and right to food have been denied in their own countries under structural adjustment. Victims of macroeconomic decisions and choices, through no fault of their own, they are chased, tracked down and humiliated if they try to flee. The dead, the injured and the handicapped of the bloody events of Ceuta and Melila in 2005, as well as the hundreds of lifeless bodies that wash up on the beaches of Mauritania, the Canary Islands, Lampedus or elsewhere are also drowned by this forced and criminalized migration.

52. The response of the European Union to African refugees from hunger is increasingly to militarize immigration procedures and border patrol. Rapid reaction teams of border guards are acting a new institution called Frontex. Frontex's "Operation Hera II" involved patrol boats, aeroplanes and helicopters from Spain, Italy, Finland and Portugal operating along the borders of Mauritania, Senegal and Cape Verde to intercept boats and return them immediately to shore.[51] European Governments seem to believe that it is possible to address the drama of migration as a military and police problem. Refugees from hunger face ill-treatment in other regions also. The thousands of people who have been fleeing famine and food shortages in the People's Democratic Republic of Korea by crossing the border to China have often faced immediate deportation. Nationals of the People's Democratic Republic of Korea who are caught while crossing the border or who are deported by the Chinese authorities are very likely to be subjected to ill and degrading treatment,[52] including forced labour in prison camps in their country of origin.

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[50] Human Rights Watch, 13 October 2005 (http://hrw.org/english/docs/2005/10/13/spain11866.htm).

[51] BBC News, 10 September 2006 (http://news.bbc.co.uk/go/pr/fr/-/2/hi/europe/5331896.stm).

[52] See Amnesty International, 4 May 2000, http://web.amnesty.org/library/Index/ENGASA170212000?open&of=ENG-PRK.

Protecting people fleeing from hunger

53. Every human being has the right to food and the fundamental right to be free from hunger. These rights have been recognized in article 11 of the International Covenant of Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, as well as in many other international instruments, without any territorial or jurisdictional limitation (E/CN.4/2006/44). All States therefore have the obligation to respect, protect and fulfil the right to food of all people, living within their jurisdiction or in other countries. All Governments have a legal obligation to help people fleeing from hunger, regardless of their country of origin or status. By extension, the Special Rapporteur believes that this means that States have the obligation to protect people fleeing from hunger and famine.

54. It is a tragedy, however, that people fleeing from hunger are not granted adequate protections and frequently face violence and forcible repatriation. The existing legal framework of international human rights, humanitarian and refugee law does provide important protections, but these need to be seriously strengthened to cover the particular situation of "refugees from hunger".

55. Most people fleeing from hunger are refused entry and protection in other countries because they do not qualify as "refugees" in the traditional and legal sense. All Governments are legally obliged to receive asylum seekers and grant protection to refugees under international law, but the definition of "refugee" is very limited. The 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees is the key legal instrument defining who is a refugee, his or her rights and the legal obligations of States. According to the 1951 Convention and its 1967 Protocol, a refugee is a person who,

> owing to well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of his former habitual residence as a result of such events, is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it.

Under the principle of non-refoulement set out in article 33 of the 1951 Convention, all people granted refugee status must be protected from expulsion or return in any manner whatsoever to the frontiers of territories where their life or freedom would be threatened on account of one or more of the grounds referred to in the definition of a refugee.

56. The principle of non-refoulement is a well-established principle of international law. It means that no person shall be rejected, returned or extradited to a territory where his life, physical integrity or liberty would be threatened. Accordingly, the Special Rapporteur on torture and other, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, Manfred Nowak, urged all Governments to "observe the principle of non-refoulement scrupulously and not expel any person to frontiers or territories where they might run the risk of human rights violations, regardless of whether they have officially been recognized as refugees" (A/60/316, para. 52).

57. Sadly, most people fleeing from hunger are not granted any of the protections that come with refugee status and the right of non-refoulement, even though they run the risk of grave violations of the right to food that amount to a threat to their

life. There have been some legal developments that broaden the understanding of who qualifies as a "refugee", but these are still limited.[53] One possible example could be that deprivation of food could amount to persecution of an individual where he or she was deprived of food because of persecution on the basis of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion. Persecutory acts could include discriminatory food distribution policies, forced and unlawful eviction from land, denial of food or severe restrictions on an individual's ability to earn a livelihood or to have access to means for procuring food for him/herself or his/her family for reasons of his/her political opinion, religion or any other of the five grounds. However, so far, few such cases have been accepted, which means that the vast majority of people fleeing from hunger are not treated as refugees under the 1951 Convention.

58. Most people fleeing across international borders to escape hunger and starvation are therefore treated as illegal "economic migrants". Under migration laws, economic migrants may be legally accepted into another country, but this is at the discretion of each country's migration policy and standard procedures and is usually based on the country's own national interest. No country is legally obliged to accept people who are defined as "economic migrants", given that they have not been forced to leave their countries. Migrants are therefore not granted the same protections as refugees and have no right of non-refoulement that would protect them from being forcibly repatriated to their own countries.

59. However, to suggest that people fleeing from hunger and famine are simply "economic migrants" and are not being forced to leave, but are simply choosing to seek a better life, is to fail completely to recognize the life-threatening situation that they face. It is absurd to suggest that people fleeing hunger and famine are fleeing "voluntarily". The Special Rapporteur insists on this crucial point: refugees from hunger should not be confused with other categories of "economic migrants". When an "economic migrant" seeks a better life by migrating to another country, he does so voluntarily. The refugee from hunger, on the other hand, does not move voluntarily, but from a "state of necessity". He is forced to flee. Especially when famine strikes a whole country or a whole region (for example the 2005 famine in the Sahel zone of sub-Saharan Africa), refugees from hunger have no other choice but to flee across international borders. Hunger is an immediate threat to their lives and those of their families. They are fleeing out of a state of necessity, not out of choice.

60. The concept of a "state of necessity" (*état de nécessité*) is a well-developed concept and one that is well established in common and civil law in many countries. For example, the French criminal code (art. 122-7) provides that a person may not

[53] Legal developments in Africa and Latin America have broadened the concept to protect those escaping generalized violence, foreign aggression, internal conflicts, massive violation of human rights or other circumstances seriously disturbing public order. Furthermore, some countries in other regions have established complementary protection regimes for persons who do not qualify as refugees under the 1951 Convention. In addition, the mandate of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees has been extended by the General Assembly to cover not only those persons who are refugees within the meaning of the 1951 Convention, but also persons outside their country of origin or habitual residence who are unable to return there owing to serious and indiscriminate threats to life, physical integrity or freedom resulting from generalized violence or events seriously disturbing public order and who, as a result, require international protection.

be held liable for an act which would under normal circumstances constitute a crime if his/her conduct was necessary to av id a threat or a danger to him/herself or a third person and if that conduct was proportionate to the seriousness of the danger. In the well-known case of *Dame Ménard*,[54] a mother was not sentenced for stealing bread because she acted out of a state of necessity, unable to allow her children to starve. Canadian criminal law similarly allows for a defence based on necessity. The rationale for this was clearly spelled out in the case of *Perka v. The Queen*, where the Supreme Court of Canada affirmed that "a liberal and humane criminal law cannot hold people to the strict obedience of laws in emergency situations where normal human instincts, whether of self-preservation or of altruism, overwhelmingly impel disobedience".[55] Fleeing across international borders cannot be considered an illegal act when people are fleeing from hunger and famine.

61. In relation to hunger and famine, it is not difficult to establish objectively such a state of necessity. Both WFP and FAO issue regular reports that identify regions where there are chronic food emergencies and even identify the number of people suffering from acute and chronic levels of malnutrition. Based on this concept, it would therefore be possible to allow for the protection of refugees from hunger by recognizing that they have the right to seek asylum and the right to receive the protection of temporary refuge. In the longer term, it is essential to take into account the most severe violations of economic and social rights, including violations of the right to food, in determining who is of refugee status.

62. On the basis of this concept, the Special Rapporteur believes that it is objectively possible to establish who is fleeing from hunger and famine, rather than for other reasons. The urgent next step is therefore to create a new legal instrument that will establish the status of "refugees from hunger" and will provide them with the right of non-refoulement, so that they are not inhumanely deported back to countries in a state of famine. The Special Rapporteur believes that it is not possible to revise existing international instruments, including the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees, and therefore there is a need to develop a specially designed instrument that will protect people fleeing from hunger and other violations of the right to food.

63. The Special Rapporteur urges all States to consider the creation of a new legal instrument to protect people fleeing from hunger and violations of the right to food. Under this new legal instrument, they would be recognized as "refugees from hunger" and granted, at the very minimum, the right of non-refoulement with temporary protection, so that they are not sent back to a country where hunger and famine threaten their lives. While Governments always bear the primary responsibility for ensuring respect of the right to food, if people flee their countries for their lives, receiving countries should not send them back to situations of hunger that threaten their lives. Criminalizing refugees from hunger will not make the problem go away. In today's world, no country can isolate itself from the effects of hunger, when millions of people are increasingly desperate. It is time that legal protection is extended to all people fleeing from hunger and severe violations of their right to food.

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[54] Cour d'Amiens, *Dame Ménard*, 22 April 1898.

[55] Supreme Court of Canada (1984), 2 S.C.R. 232.

V. Conclusions and recommendations

64. **The Special Rapporteur puts forward the following conclusions and recommendations:**

(a) **Hunger is not inevitable. The lack of progress towards meeting the World Food Summit goal and the Millennium Development Goal of halving the proportion of people who suffer from hunger is unacceptable. All States should take immediate action to realize the human right to food of all their people. Lessons can be learned from the very positive examples of many Governments detailed in this report. The important initiatives of the Government of Bolivia observed by the Special Rapporteur during his mission to Bolivia in 2007 set an example for the rest of the world.**

(b) **All States should ensure that their international political and economic policies, including international trade agreements, do not have a negative impact on the right to food in other countries. In this context, European Union Governments must ensure that economic partnership agreements with Asian, Caribbean and Pacific countries do not negatively affect the progressive realization of the right to food in those countries and include safeguard mechanisms to allow appropriate responses to any resulting food insecurity and hunger. All international trade agreement negotiations should include the participation of all stakeholders, including civil society.**

(c) **States should establish a five-year moratorium on all initiatives to develop biofuels through converting food into fuel. This should provide time for an assessment of the potential impact on the right to food, as well as on other social, environmental and human rights, and should ensure that biofuels do not produce hunger.**

(d) **States should ensure that biofuels are produced from non-food plants, agricultural wastes and crop residues, rather than food crops, in order to avert massive rises in the prices of food, water and land and the diversion of these resources away from food production. This will require immediate massive investment in "second generation" technologies for producing biofuels.**

(e) **States should adopt appropriate measures to ensure that biofuel production is based on family agriculture, rather than agro-industrial methods, in order to avert creating hunger and instead create employment and rural development that does not bypass the poor.**

(f) **States should strengthen international and national protection mechanisms for people forced to leave their homes and land because of hunger or other severe violations of their right to food. In this regard, States should elaborate a new international legal instrument that will provide protections for all people fleeing from hunger who are not currently protected under international human rights, humanitarian or refugee law.**

(g) **At a minimum, States should extend the principle of non-refoulement to people fleeing hunger and starvation owing to a state of necessity, and refrain from deporting them. Governments should not expel, return or extradite a person to another country when there are substantial grounds for believing that he/she would be in danger of suffering from hunger, chronic undernourishment or other severe violations of the right to food. Governments**

should duly recognize the state of urgency that compels these people to flee and that they are entitled to receive temporary protection on the basis of the principle of non-refoulement.

(h) The right to food is a human right. Leaving people to suffer from hunger, famine and starvation is a violation of human rights.

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Item 65 of the provisional agenda*
Advancement of women

Status of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women

Report of the Secretary-General**

Summary

The present report is submitted in compliance with General Assembly resolution 60/230 of 23 December 2005 on the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, in which the Assembly requested the Secretary-General to submit to it at its sixty-second session a report on the status of the Convention and the implementation of the resolution. It covers the period from 1 August 2005 to 15 August 2007.

* A/62/150.

** The report was submitted late so as to reflect the most recent developments from the thirty-ninth session of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women.

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I. Status of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women

1. The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women was adopted by the General Assembly by resolution 34/180 of 18 December 1979. It was opened for signature, ratification and accession in New York on 1 March 1980 and, in accordance with article 27 of the Convention, entered into force on 3 September 1981.

2. As at 15 August 2007, 185 States had ratified, acceded to or succeeded to the Convention, of which 81 had acceded to it and 8 had succeeded to it. This represents an additional five ratifications in the current reporting period from 1 August 2005 to 15 August 2007 (see A/60/206 for the previous report). The most recent States to ratify or accede to the Convention were Brunei Darussalam, on 24 May 2006; Cook Islands, on 11 August 2006; Marshall Islands, on 2 March 2006; Montenegro, on 23 October 2006; and Oman, on 7 February 2006. The list of States parties to the Convention and the dates of their ratification or accession to the Convention are contained in the report of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women on its thirty-seventh, thirty-eighth and thirty-ninth sessions.[1]

3. As at 15 August 2007, 49 States parties had deposited with the Secretary-General instruments of acceptance of the amendment to article 20, paragraph 1, of the Convention, relating to the meeting time of the Committee. The additional four acceptances since the submission of the last report were by the following States parties: Bangladesh, on 3 May 2007; Georgia, on 30 September 2005; Liberia, on 16 September 2005; and Slovenia, on 10 November 2006.

4. During the period from 1 August 2005 to 15 August 2007, reservations were made by Brunei Darussalam, which entered a general reservation as well as reservations to article 9, paragraph 2, and article 29, paragraph 1; Cook Islands to article 2 (f), article 5 (a), and article 11 (2) (b); and Oman, which entered a general reservation as well as reservations to article 9, paragraph 2, article 15, paragraph 4, article 16, subparagraphs (a), (c) and (f), and article 29, paragraph 1.

5. During the same period, objections to reservations were received from Austria, Belgium, Canada, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Spain, Sweden and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

6. During the period under review, withdrawals of reservations were received from Austria to parts of article 11; Cook Islands to article 2 (f), article 5 (a), and article 11 (2) (b); Kuwait to article 7 (a); New Zealand in respect of service in the armed forces; Singapore (without reference to an article of the Convention); and the United Kingdom to article 15, paragraph 4.

[1] To be issued as *Official Records of the General Assembly, Sixty-second Session, Supplement No. 38* (A/62/38).

II. Status of the Optional Protocol to the Convention

7. By its resolution 54/4 of 6 October 1999, the General Assembly adopted the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. The Optional Protocol was opened for signature, ratification and accession at United Nations Headquarters on 10 December 1999 and, in accordance with article 16, paragraph 1, entered into force on 22 December 2000.

8. As at 15 August 2007, 88 States parties had ratified or acceded to the Optional Protocol. This represents an increase of 17 ratifications since the submission of the last report. These 17 States parties were: Antigua and Barbuda, on 5 June 2006; Argentina, on 20 March 2007; Armenia, on 14 September 2007; Botswana, on 21 February 2007; Bulgaria, on 20 September 2006; Burkina Faso, on 10 October 2005; Colombia, on 23 January 2007; Maldives, on 13 March 2006; Moldova, on 28 February 2006; Montenegro, on 23 October 2006; Nepal, on 15 June 2007; the Republic of Korea, on 18 October 2006; Saint Kitts and Nevis, on 20 January 2006; San Marino, on 15 September 2005; South Africa, on 18 October 2005; the United Republic of Tanzania, on 12 January 2006; and Vanuatu, on 17 May 2007.

III. Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women

A. Capacity to fulfil its mandate

Fulfilment by States parties of reporting obligations

9. Article 18, paragraph 1, of the Convention provides that States parties undertake to submit reports on the implementation of the Convention within one year after its entry into force for the State party concerned, and thereafter at least every four years and, further, whenever the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women so requests.

10. Between 1 August 2005 and 15 August 2007, the Secretary-General received the reports of the following 44 States parties: Belgium (combined fifth and sixth periodic report); Belize (combined third and fourth periodic report); Bhutan (seventh periodic report); Bolivia (combined second, third and fourth periodic report); Brazil (sixth periodic report); Burundi (combined second, third and fourth periodic report); Cameroon (combined second and third periodic report); Canada (combined sixth and seventh periodic report); Cook Islands (initial report); Ecuador (combined sixth and seventh periodic report); El Salvador (seventh periodic report); Estonia (fourth periodic report); France (sixth periodic report); Honduras (combined fourth, fifth and sixth periodic report); Hungary (sixth periodic report); India (combined second and third periodic report); Jordan (combined third and fourth periodic report); Kenya (combined fifth and sixth periodic report); Kyrgyzstan (third periodic report); Lebanon (third periodic report); Liechtenstein (third periodic report); Luxembourg (fifth periodic report); Madagascar (combined second, third, fourth and fifth periodic report); Mexico (sixth periodic report); Mongolia (fifth periodic report); Morocco (combined third and fourth periodic report); Myanmar (combined second and third periodic report); New Zealand (sixth periodic report); Nigeria (sixth periodic report); Norway (seventh periodic report); Portugal (sixth

periodic report); the Republic of Korea (sixth periodic report); Saint Lucia (combined initial, second, third, fourth, fifth and sixth periodic report); Saudi Arabia (combined initial and second periodic report); Serbia (initial report); Sierra Leone (combined initial, second, third, fourth and fifth periodic report); Slovakia (combined second, third and fourth periodic report); Slovenia (fourth periodic report); Sweden (combined sixth and seventh periodic report); the Syrian Arab Republic (initial report); the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland (sixth periodic report); the United Republic of Tanzania (combined third, fourth and fifth periodic report); Uruguay (combined fourth, fifth, sixth and seventh periodic report); and Yemen (sixth periodic report).

11. During the period covered by the present report, the Committee held six sessions, as follows: thirty-fourth session, from 16 January to 3 February 2006; thirty-fifth session, from 15 May to 2 June 2006; thirty-sixth session, from 7 to 25 August 2006; thirty-seventh session, from 15 January to 2 February 2007; thirty-eighth session, from 14 May to 1 June 2007; and thirty-ninth session, from 23 July to 10 August 2007. During these sessions, the Committee considered 144 (many combined) reports submitted by 69 States parties: four initial reports (Cook Islands, Mauritania, Serbia and the Syrian Arab Republic); four combined initial and second periodic reports (Malaysia, Mozambique, the Niger and Turkmenistan); seven combined initial, second and third periodic reports (Bosnia and Herzegovina, Cambodia, Eritrea, Pakistan, Tajikistan, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Vanuatu); two combined initial, second, third, fourth and fifth periodic reports (Sierra Leone and Togo); two combined initial, second, third, fourth, fifth and sixth periodic reports (Cape Verde and Saint Lucia); two second periodic reports (Kazakhstan and Liechtenstein); seven combined second and third periodic reports (Azerbaijan, Georgia, India, Maldives, Moldova, Namibia and Uzbekistan); two combined second, third, fourth and fifth periodic reports (Malawi and Mali); four third periodic reports (the Czech Republic, Liechtenstein, Singapore and Suriname); two combined third and fourth periodic reports (Belize and Jordan); three combined third, fourth and fifth periodic reports (Cyprus, Ghana and Mauritius); three fourth periodic reports (Chile, Estonia and the Netherlands); five combined fourth and fifth periodic reports (Australia, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Indonesia, Poland and Thailand); three combined fourth, fifth and sixth periodic reports (Guinea, Honduras and the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela); two fifth periodic reports (Jamaica and Republic of Korea); five combined fifth and sixth periodic reports (China, Colombia, Cuba, Kenya and the Philippines); thirteen sixth periodic reports (Austria, Brazil, Denmark, Greece, Guatemala, Hungary, Mexico, New Zealand, Nicaragua, Peru, Poland, the Republic of Korea and Romania); and one seventh periodic report (Norway).

Reports awaiting consideration, overdue reports and requests for follow-up reports

12. As at 15 August 2007, 32 (mainly combined) reports submitted by 31 States parties had yet to be considered by the Committee.

13. As at 15 August 2007, 125 States parties had a total of 215 overdue reports, of which 30 were initial reports, 25 second periodic reports, 28 third periodic reports, 39 fourth periodic reports, 23 fifth periodic reports, 43 sixth periodic reports and 27 seventh periodic reports.

14. In the light of the reduction of the backlog of reports awaiting consideration, the Committee has initiated a systematic effort to encourage States parties to submit long overdue initial reports. In doing so, the Committee proceeded on the basis of its decisions 29/1 and 31/III (i), establishing that it would proceed with consideration of the implementation of the Convention in the absence of a report only as a last resort and in the presence of a delegation. The Committee has invited a number of States parties to submit all their overdue reports as a combined report by a specific date, as follows:

(a) Cape Verde and Saint Lucia were invited by the Committee to submit their reports, and Cape Verde submitted its report in June 2005, and Saint Lucia in September 2005. The Committee considered these reports at its thirty-fifth and thirty-sixth sessions, respectively;

(b) Dominica, Guinea-Bissau, Haiti and Liberia were invited by the Committee at its thirty-seventh session to submit all their overdue reports as combined reports by March 2008, for consideration at its forty-third session in 2009;

(c) Bahamas, the Central African Republic, Grenada and Seychelles were invited by the Committee at its thirty-eighth session to submit all their overdue reports as combined reports by the end of 2008, for consideration by the Committee in early 2010;

(d) Chad, the Comoros, Lesotho and Papua New Guinea were invited by the Committee at its thirty-ninth session to submit all their overdue reports as combined reports by July 2009, for consideration by the Committee in late 2010;

As a measure of last resort, and failing the receipt of the reports within the suggested time frame, the Committee will proceed with consideration of the implementation of the Convention in the States parties concerned in the absence of a report.

15. The Committee sent reminder letters to all States parties whose initial reports were overdue as of 2005.

16. Following consideration of India's combined second and third periodic report at its thirty-seventh session, the Committee requested the State party to submit a follow-up report in January 2008 (CEDAW/C/IND/CO/3). At the same session, following consideration of The Netherlands' fourth periodic report, the Committee requested the State party to submit a follow-up report in January 2008 (see CEDAW/C/NLD/CO/4).

B. Working methods of the Committee

17. In order to contribute to the efforts of General Assembly to limit the length of documentation, the Committee dispensed with the inclusion of summaries of the introductory statements of reporting States in its annual report (thirty-fourth session). These 30-minute introductory statements of States parties are posted on the website of the Division for the Advancement of Women. They are also reflected in the Committee's summary records.

18. The Committee's first overview of its working methods, included in the report on its thirtieth session, was updated to reflect in particular the Committee's working

methods in parallel chambers (see CEDAW/C/2007/I/4/Add.1). This overview intends to make the Committee's working methods readily accessible to States parties and others interested in the implementation of the Convention. The overview is also available on the website of the Division for the Advancement of Women.

19. During the period covered in the present report, the most significant new developments in the Committee's working methods occurred in regard to its work in parallel chambers for purposes of consideration of reports. Following the adoption of General Assembly resolution 60/230, the Committee held three annual sessions in 2006 and 2007, respectively, as compared to two annual sessions in previous years. Furthermore, the Committee met in parallel chambers during three of these six sessions, i.e. at its thirty-sixth, thirty-seventh and thirty-ninth sessions.

20. The Committee held a preliminary discussion of its working methods pertaining to its meetings in parallel chambers at its thirty-fourth session and adopted them at its thirty-fifth session.[2] These cover in particular the procedure for establishing parallel chambers, including their membership; officers of the Committee in relation to parallel chambers; the role of the country rapporteur and preparation of concluding comments; modalities for consideration of reports in parallel chambers; and adoption of concluding comments in Plenary. It held an in-depth discussion of these working methods during an informal meeting in Berlin from 2 to 4 May 2006, based on a background paper prepared by its secretariat. The Committee also benefited from the insights of one member of the Committee on the Rights of the Child, who shared the experience of that Committee in regard to its meetings in parallel chambers.

21. The Committee undertook regular assessments of its working methods in parallel chambers, and improved these based on the experience gained. Adjustments were made in regard to the role of the country rapporteurs including the due date, format and content of their briefing notes; coordination and cooperation among members in a chamber, and between the two chambers, respectively; time management during the constructive dialogue; and the role of the Chairperson in guiding the constructive dialogue.

22. The Committee first designated country rapporteurs at its nineteenth session. At its thirty-fifth session, it adopted guidelines on the role and functions of the country rappporteur which consolidated the tasks assigned to the country rapporteur in regard to the three phases of the consideration of reports, i.e. the preparation of lists of issues and questions for the pre-session working group; the consideration of the report(s) of the State party, in particular the identification of issues and priorities to be raised during the constructive dialogue; and the preparation and finalization of draft concluding comments.[3] Country rapporteurs were designated for all States parties, and these experts took on additional responsibilities in coordinating the work in chambers, and ensuring that all experts could contribute to the dialogue in a timely and meaningful manner. The Committee also continued to use country task forces for consideration of reports in plenary meetings.

23. Since the Committee held three annual sessions during the reporting period, it adjusted the scheduling of its pre-session working group so as to ensure that enough

[2] See *Official Records of the General Assembly, Sixty-first Session, Supplement No. 38* (A/61/38), part two, paras. 363-380.

[3] Ibid., paras. 388-399.

time was available to States parties to respond to their respective lists of issues and questions, as well as to ensure availability of the responses in all official languages for the sessions when these reports were considered. Thus, the pre-session working group usually met two sessions in advance of consideration of a report rather than one. The number of experts who participated in the pre-session working group was determined in a flexible manner. In preparing lists of issues and questions, the pre-session working groups focused on progress made in Convention implementation since consideration of the previous reports, the impact of measures taken by States parties, as well as on follow-up action to the Committee's previous concluding comments. The pre-session working groups adhered to the agreed limit of not more than 30 clear and direct questions per list. States parties were advised of the Committee's established page limitation for responses of 25 to 30 pages.

24. The Committee now routinely includes the last paragraph of its concluding comments that establishes the due date for the State party's next periodic report. In cases where the next periodic report is overdue or becomes due within a year of the date of consideration, the Committee requests the State party to submit its next report as a combined periodic report.[4]

25. The Committee continued its interaction with the specialized agencies and other bodies of the United Nations system that contribute to its work and support the full implementation of the Convention at the national level. The Committee adopted guidelines for submission of reports by United Nations specialized agencies and other bodies, which refer to the country-specific information that the agencies and bodies can provide to the Committee; and to the work of these agencies and bodies in contributing to the implementation of the Convention at the national level.[5] The Committee especially appreciated the efforts of a number of United Nations country teams who submitted joint information in conjunction with consideration of reports, and encouraged the entities of the United Nations system to expand this practice and, in particular, to make such information available to the Committee's pre-session working group. The Committee encouraged the United Nations country teams to undertake follow-up activities on the basis of the Committee's concluding comments at the country level, and to submit further information to the Committee during future reporting by the respective State party.

26. The Committee continued its practice of meeting informally with non-governmental organizations wishing to present country-specific information on States parties whose reports were before it, at the beginning of the first and second weeks of the session. The Committee's pre-session working group also provided opportunities for non-governmental organizations to present written and oral information. General and session-specific information notes for non-governmental organizations are regularly posted on the website of the Division for the Advancement of Women.

27. The Committee confirmed its interest in establishing interaction with national human rights institutions, and continued to examine the practice of other human rights treaty bodies. Two national human rights institutions addressed the

[4] Document CEDAW/C/2007/III/2 gives an overview of due dates of future combined reports. An update will be contained in CEDAW/C/2008/I/2.

[5] See *Official Records of the General Assembly, Sixty-first Session, Supplement No. 38*, part one, annex II.

Committee at its thirty-ninth session, during a separate segment of the Committee's meeting allocated to interaction with non-governmental organizations.

28. The Committee continued to emphasize the important role of parliamentarians in the implementation of the Convention and follow-up to concluding comments. It encouraged the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) to submit country-specific information pertaining to the implementation of the Convention in States parties. The IPU now regularly submits such information to the Committee.

29. The Committee continued its practice of adopting statements in relation to particular events or developments. During the reporting period, these included a statement entitled "Towards a harmonized and integrated human rights treaty bodies system" at the thirty-fifth session;[6] a statement regarding the situation of women in the Middle East at the thirty-sixth session;[7] and a statement on United Nations reform pertaining to its gender equality structure at the thirty-ninth session, contained in part three, annex XI, of the annual report.[7]

30. The Committee convened two informal meetings with States parties to the Convention, on 1 June 2006, and on 8 August 2007, respectively. These meetings provided opportunities for Committee experts to brief States parties on the Committee's working methods in regard to its meetings in parallel chambers; and to update them on the Committee's request to the sixty-second session of the General Assembly for an extension of meeting time.

31. During the period under review, the Committee was able to hold its fifth informal meeting. At the invitation of the Government of Germany to mark the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Committee's work, the Committee met from 2 to 4 May 2006, in Berlin. It used the occasion to finalize its working methods for consideration of reports in parallel chambers; and for a discussion of the reform proposals of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights concerning a standing unified human rights treaty body. In August 2007, the Committee was very pleased to receive an invitation from the Government of Switzerland for an informal working session during the second half of 2007. The Committee proposed that this meeting be held from 24 to 26 October 2007, and intends to take up a number of issues, including revision of its guidelines on reporting; preparation of a general recommendation on article 2 of the Convention; follow-up to the Committee's concluding comments; interaction with national human rights institutions; and its relationship with the Human Rights Council. The Committee also plans to hold an orientation session with the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights pertaining to the transfer of the servicing of the Committee to that Office as of 1 January 2008.

32. With the support of a working group, the Committee continued its elaboration of a general recommendation on migrant women. At the invitation of the Committee on Migrant Workers, the Committee agreed to collaborate with that Committee on its further development. Work also continued on a general recommendation on article 2 of the Convention.

33. The Committee welcomes opportunities for discussion with special rapporteurs of the Human Rights Council, on issues of mutual concern. At its thirty-fourth

[6] Ibid., part two, annex I.

[7] Ibid., part three, annex VII.

session, the Committee met with the Special Rapporteur on the right to adequate housing as a component of the right to an adequate standard of living.

34. The Committee has taken a consistent interest in the question of United Nations reform pertaining to its gender equality architecture. The Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women regularly briefed and discussed this question and current developments with Committee experts.

35. The Committee continued to contribute actively to the work of the human rights treaty bodies, especially within the framework of the annual meetings of chairpersons of treaty bodies, and the inter-committee meeting. The Chairperson, as well as designated members of the Committee, participated in these meetings in 2006 (19 to 23 June 2006) and 2007 (18 to 22 June 2007). The Committee endorsed the guidelines on reporting under international human rights treaties, including guidelines on a common core document and treaty-specific documents (HRI/MC/2006/3 and Corr.1), and initiated work to revise its own reporting guidelines accordingly. It participated actively in a working group on harmonization of working methods of treaty bodies (see HRI/MC/2007/2 and Add.1), as well as in a working group on reservations (HRI/MC/2007/5). The Committee contributed to the discussion about reform of the human rights treaty bodies system, in particular through its above-mentioned statement "Towards a harmonized and integrated human rights treaty bodies system". Most recently, the Committee supported the proposal of the inter-committee meeting that it meet twice annually, including for purposes of making recommendations for the improvement and harmonization of working methods of human rights treaty bodies, and suggested that harmonization of working methods should also aim to enhance the efficiency of the committees' working methods. It proposed that the inter-committee meeting, at its next meeting, establish a set of issues for discussion, within a specified time frame, and in order of priority. The Committee submitted suggestions for such priorities, and strongly encouraged the inter-committee meeting to conduct a self-assessment of its own working methods and efficiency (thirty-ninth session).

36. In October 2006, the Secretary-General informed the Chairperson of the Committee of his conclusion that common objectives would be best served by the United Nations if responsibility for supporting the Committee were to be transferred to the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights. The Chairperson subsequently conveyed this decision to the members of the Committee. The Committee held discussions with the High Commissioner pertaining to the transfer of servicing at its thirty-seventh session, and the Committee subsequently wrote to the Secretary-General and the High Commissioner conveying its views on this question. Staff of the Office of the High Commissioner observed the thirty-eighth and thirty-ninth sessions of the Committee.

C. Working methods with regard to the Optional Protocol

37. During the reporting period, the Committee continued to carry out its activities under the Optional Protocol to the Convention. On average, it has allocated two meetings per session to deal with all matters relating to the Optional Protocol.

38. The Committee's Working Group on Communications under the Optional Protocol held four three-day sessions in conjunction with the Committee's thirty-fourth, thirty-sixth, thirty-seventh and thirty-ninth sessions. It also held an informal

two-day meeting after the close of the Committee's thirty-eighth session. To date, the Working Group has registered 15 communications, of which 6 were registered during the reporting period.

39. During its thirty-fourth session, the Committee took action on communication 8/2005 (*Rahime Kayhan v. Turkey*), declaring it inadmissible for failure to exhaust domestic remedies under article 4, paragraph 1, of the Optional Protocol. At the thirty-fifth session it deferred action on communications until the following session. At its thirty-sixth session, the Committee took action on two communications. It concluded that there had been no discriminatory treatment of the author in communication 3/2004 (*Dung Thi Thuy Nguyen v. The Netherlands*). The Committee was of the view that the facts in communication 4/2004 (*Ms. Andrea Szijjarto v. Hungary*) revealed a violation of articles 10 (h), 12 and 16, paragraph 1, of the Optional Protocol.

40. During its thirty-seventh session, the Committee declared communication 11/2006 (*Ms. Constance Ragan Salgado v. the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland*) inadmissible *ratione temporis* under article 4, paragraph 2 (e), and for the author's failure to exhaust domestic remedies under article 4, paragraph 1, of the Optional Protocol. During its thirty-eighth session, the Committee declared communication 10/2005 (*Ms. N. S. F. v. the United Kingdom*) inadmissible for the author's failure to exhaust domestic remedies under article 4, paragraph 1, of the Optional Protocol.

41. During its thirty-ninth session, the Committee took action on three communications. In communications 5/2005 (*the descendants of Şahide Goekce [deceased] v. Austria*) and 6/2005 (*the descendants of Fatma Yildirim [deceased] v. Austria*), the Committee found that the State party violated its obligations under article 2 (a) and (c) through (f), and 3 of the Convention, read in conjunction with article 1 of the Convention and general recommendation 19 of the Committee and the corresponding rights of the deceased to life and physical and mental integrity. The Committee declared communication 7/2005 (*Cristina Muñoz-Vargas y Sainz de Vicuña v. Spain*) inadmissible *ratione temporis* under article 4, paragraph 2 (e), of the Optional Protocol.

42. During the reporting period, the Committee began its follow-up activities to the views on communications. At its thirty-fourth session, it appointed two of its members as ad hoc rapporteurs on follow-up to the views on communication No. 2/2003, *Ms. A. T. v. Hungary*. At the following session and on the basis of the recommendations of the rapporteurs to communication No. 2/2003, the Committee requested further follow-up information from the State party. At its thirty-sixth session, on the recommendation of the rapporteurs, the Committee decided to bring to a close its follow-up on the views of communication 2/2003 and that any further information on follow-up to the views on this case would be requested in the framework of the reporting procedure under article 18 of the Convention.

43. At its thirty-eighth session, the Committee appointed two of its members as ad hoc rapporteurs on follow-up to the views on communication No. 4/2004, *Ms. Andrea Szijjarto v. Hungary* and, on their recommendation, requested further information on follow-up of the State party. The mandates of the rapporteurs on follow-up to the views on communication No. 4/2004 have not yet been brought to an end.

44. In addition to its consideration and action on individual communications and follow-up to views, and on the recommendations of the Working Group on Communications under the Optional Protocol, the Committee amended rules 60, 63, 64 and 69 of its rules of procedure in chapter XVI entitled "Procedures for the consideration of communications received under the Optional Protocol" (see part three, chap. V of the annual report).[1]

D. Request for extension of the meeting time of the Committee

45. Based on the request of the Committee, the General Assembly, in its resolution 60/230, granted the Committee an extension of meeting time to eliminate the backlog of reports awaiting consideration. As a result, the Committee was able to consider the reports of a total of 69 States parties, namely of 31 States parties in 2006, and of 38 States parties in 2007. This was more than twice the 32 States parties which the Committee considers when it meets for two annual sessions. This extended meeting time has enabled the Committee to significantly reduce the backlog of reports awaiting consideration. At the time of the completion of the previous report, the reports of 58 States parties awaited consideration, compared to the reports of 31 States parties as of today. An updated table indicating the status of ratifications, the number of reports received annually since 1982, as well as the number of reports considered by the Committee annually, is contained in annex I to the present report.

46. Having considered the progress made in reducing the backlog, and taking into consideration all its responsibilities under the Convention and the Optional Protocol, the Committee decided to request the General Assembly for a further extension of its meeting time, beyond the biennium 2006-2007. This request is contained in decision 39/I, in part three of its annual report,[1] where the Committee requests that the General Assembly: (a) authorize the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, as a permanent measure from 2008 onwards, to hold three annual sessions of three weeks each, with a one-week pre-session working group for each session; and (b) authorize the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women to meet, as a temporary measure in the biennium 2008-2009, for up to seven days in parallel chambers during one of its annual sessions in each year of the biennium, for the purpose of considering reports submitted by States parties under article 18 of the Convention. The Committee also requests that its Working Group on Communications under the Optional Protocol, which is authorized to meet twice a year for a total of 10 working days, be granted the opportunity to meet three times a year, for a total of 10 working days, immediately prior to, or after the scheduled sessions of the Committee.

47. In adopting this decision, the Committee noted that this extended meeting time will ensure that it can fully eliminate the backlog of reports awaiting consideration; ensure that incoming reports are considered in a timely manner; enhance its efforts at ensuring that monitoring of the implementation of the Convention in States parties with long overdue reports is undertaken; and discharge all its other responsibilities under the Convention and the Optional Protocol.

48. A statement of programme budget implications pertaining to the extension of meeting time is contained in the annual report of the Committee. The Committee requested that the basis for calculating the costs for the extended meeting time be

revisited so as to ensure that these are in line with the actual requirements of the Committee and that the statement clearly explain the different parameters used for calculating the current requirements as compared to those of a similar request of the Committee in 2005.[8]

49. Furthermore, and as a temporary measure for the biennium 2008-2009, the Committee decided that summary records of its meetings should be issued in English only, in order to reduce the overall costs of its sessions. The Committee agreed to revisit this decision in 2009, when it will also assess its requirements for any further temporary extension of its meeting time.

IV. Efforts to encourage universal ratification of the Convention, its Optional Protocol and acceptance of the amendment to article 20, paragraph 1, of the Convention

50. The Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women and the Director of the Division for the Advancement of Women have continued their efforts to encourage universal ratification of the Convention and the Optional Protocol, and to ensure acceptance of the amendment to article 20, paragraph 1, of the Convention, which relates to the meeting time allocated to the Committee. They have encouraged related action in their meetings with delegations, as well as in statements and presentations at United Nations Headquarters, at other duty stations, and at conferences and other forums.

V. Technical assistance provided to States parties

51. The Division for the Advancement of Women continues to offer technical assistance to States parties on implementation and reporting under the Convention and the Beijing Platform for Action, as well as on implementation and follow-up to the Committee's concluding comments. Assistance also involves ratification and use of the Optional Protocol.

52. During the reporting period, the Division organized one subregional training workshop and one national workshop on implementation and follow-up to the Committee's concluding comments. The subregional workshop was held in Bangkok, Thailand, from 6 to 9 November 2006 in collaboration with the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific. Government officials, members of Parliament, non-governmental organizations and members of the United Nations country teams from six countries in the Asia-Pacific region participated in the event. Participants adopted a statement on challenges and opportunities for action in follow-up to concluding comments. The national workshop was held at the request of the Government of Cambodia and took place in Phnom Penh from 1 to 2 November 2006. It was attended by 40 participants from 15 Ministries and Government bodies, non-governmental organizations and observers from United Nations entities. In both cases, experts from the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women served as resource persons and facilitators.

[8] Ibid., *Sixtieth Session, Supplement No. 38* (A/60/38), part two, annex IX.

53. A subregional workshop on follow-up to, and implementation of the concluding observations/comments of the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination and the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women took place in Cairo, Egypt, from 19 to 22 December 2005. The workshop was jointly organized by the Division and the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights. It was attended by over 50 participants from six countries of the North African region and included government officials, members of the judiciary, representatives of national human rights institutions, national non-governmental organizations, the League of Arab States and United Nations agencies. Experts from both Committees served as resource persons and facilitators at the workshop.

54. One of the priorities of the Division's programme of technical cooperation includes the provision of sustained and comprehensive support to post-conflict countries to implement the Convention. As part of this programme, the Division supports States parties emerging from conflict to take advantage of the opportunity that the process of post-conflict reconstruction offers to review their legislative and policy framework and carry out reforms to align their laws and policies with the provisions and obligations of the Convention. In the implementation of this programme, the Division has benefited from the support and advice of the United Nations missions and the United Nations country teams in the States parties concerned. Funding for this programme was provided by the Governments of Ireland, Norway and New Zealand.

55. At the invitation of the respective Governments, the Division organized consultation missions on the Convention to Afghanistan, from 26 to 30 August 2006, and to Haiti, from 16 to 20 April 2007. These consultations were designed to increase awareness and visibility of the Convention at the highest political levels, and provided an opportunity for assessing the current status of national implementation of the Convention. They resulted in recommendations for priority action by Government and non-governmental organizations. The consultations will be followed by training and other capacity-building activities.

56. In Afghanistan, five experts held meetings with key ministries and institutions, the leadership of Parliament, including the Women and Human Rights Parliamentary Committee, the Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission, United Nations entities and non-governmental organizations. In Haiti, three experts held consultations with high-level officials from ministries, members of Parliament, non-governmental organizations and the United Nations country team, and follow-up activities are under way to support the State party in the preparation of its combined initial, second, third, fourth, fifth and sixth periodic report under article 18 of the Convention, which the Committee has requested be submitted by March 2008.

57. Also at the invitation of the Government, the Division organized a consultation mission to Liberia, from 12 to 15 June 2006, where four experts on the Convention met with high-level officials from eight ministries, members of Parliament, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, non-governmental organizations and the United Nations country team. The experts also met with President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf, who pledged her full support for efforts to improve national implementation of the Convention in Liberia. The Division subsequently organized a training workshop for staff of the Ministry of Gender and Development on the Convention including reporting, designed to strengthen the capacity of ministry staff to carry out

their functions as catalysts for gender equality. The workshop took place from 19 to 21 March 2007, with the participation of 30 staff members of the Ministry of Gender and Development. This workshop was complemented by a second workshop, from 18 to 22 June 2007, on report-writing for staff from the Ministry of Gender and Development and several line ministries expected to be directly involved in preparation of the report. Both events were facilitated by two experts of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women and staff of the Division. At the request of the Minister of Gender and Development, and based on the discussions during the two workshops, experts prepared a framework for preparation of the report as well as a timeline. The Division anticipates that a further workshop will be convened in November 2007 to consider a first draft report and identify remaining gaps and challenges. This technical assistance is especially timely as the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women requested Liberia to submit its combined initial, second, third, fourth, fifth and sixth periodic report under article 18 of the Convention by March 2008.

58. The Division continued to support Sierra Leone in the implementation of the Convention and preparation of its report, in a programme that had started in 2004. From 20 to 22 June 2006, the Division convened a workshop to review the draft report under article 18 of the Convention and a national validation workshop on the revised report on 31 October 2006. The State party submitted its combined initial, second, third, fourth and fifth periodic report under article 18 of the Convention in December 2006. The report was considered by the Committee in a constructive dialogue on 17 May 2007.

59. The Division continued its collaboration with the Inter-Parliamentary Union in one-day briefing sessions for parliamentarians from countries whose reports had recently been or would soon be considered by the Committee. The sessions took place in October 2005 and 2006. Experts from the Committee served as presenters and resource persons. At the 2006 session, the event had, as a special focus for discussion, the question of violence against women, and in particular the role of parliamentarians in the follow-up to the in-depth study of the Secretary-General on violence against women (A/61/122/Add.1 and Corr.1)

60. A staff member of the Division participated as a resource person in two workshops on the Optional Protocol for lawyers, organized by non-governmental organizations in Bulgaria and Poland, from 30 March to 5 April 2006, and 20 to 27 September 2006, respectively. A staff member served as resource person on the use of the Optional Protocol at a workshop for representatives of non-governmental organizations of the South-East Asian region, held in Maldives from 11 to 17 November 2006.

61. In April and June 2007, at the invitation of the Government of Mexico, a staff member of the Division participated in three workshops of a series of international workshops on international instruments on women's human rights, persons with disabilities, and gender-based violence in Mexico.

VI. Dissemination of the Convention, its Optional Protocol and information on the work of the Committee

62. The Division for the Advancement of Women maintains a page on its website that is dedicated to the Convention and its Optional Protocol and the work of the Committee. The text of the Convention and its Optional Protocol, the reports of States parties, lists of issues and questions, responses from States parties, States parties' introductory statements and composition of delegations presenting reports, the Committee's concluding comments and documents prepared for the Committee, as well as other relevant information concerning the Convention, its Optional Protocol, the working methods of the Committee and the meetings of States parties are posted on the website. The Committee's concluding comments are also disseminated through the electronic listserv administered by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights.

63. The Division regularly sends to the resident coordinators in States parties concerned the Committee's concluding comments with an invitation to support that State party in its follow-up efforts.

64. On 23 July 2007, the Committee celebrated the twenty-fifth anniversary of its work with a panel of high-level guests, including the President of the sixty-first session of the General Assembly, the High Commissioner for Human Rights, a Vice-Chairperson of the Commission on the Status of Women, the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women and two representatives of non-governmental organizations. One of the experts of the Committee as well as its Chairperson also made presentations. The Division prepared several information notes on the occasion, including on the history of the Committee, its membership, Bureaux, and Chairpersons. These materials are available on the website at http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/25anniversary.htm.

VII. Conclusions and recommendations

65. **The year 2007 marks the twenty-fifth anniversary of the work of the Committee, which held its first session from 18 to 22 October 1982 at the United Nations Office at Vienna. Since then, the Committee held 39 sessions, examined 401 reports submitted by 154 States parties, and adopted 25 general recommendations. It has registered 15 communications under the Optional Protocol. Of these, five have been declared inadmissible and five have been decided on the merits. The Committee has completed one inquiry.**

66. **The Committee's use of the extended meeting time approved by the General Assembly in December 2005 has resulted in a significant reduction of the backlog of reports awaiting consideration and in a more timely consideration of reports. It has also achieved an increase in the number of decisions taken under the Optional Protocol. The Committee has used efficient working methods for its meetings in parallel chambers, and has adjusted these based on experience gained. It has enhanced its interaction with stakeholders in the implementation of the Convention, including with national human rights institutions, and has actively contributed to the common efforts of all treaty bodies to strengthen the human rights treaty bodies system. It has undertaken a systematic effort to encourage States parties to submit overdue initial reports.**

Technical assistance provided by the Division for the Advancement of Women, funded to a large extent by extrabudgetary resources, contributed to the enhanced capacity of States parties to implement the Convention, including the reporting obligation.

67. **In the last 10 years, 23 States parties per annum have on average submitted their reports under article 18 of the Convention. While the Committee was able to reduce significantly the backlog of reports awaiting consideration during the last two years, the reports of 31 States parties continue to await consideration. The Committee has concluded that the effective and timely implementation of all its responsibilities under the Convention and the Optional Protocol will require that it be provided on a permanent basis with three annual sessions of three weeks each, and each with a one-week pre-session working group. It has further concluded that, as a temporary measure, the Committee will require additional meeting time in parallel chambers as may be necessary in the light of its workload.**

68. **The General Assembly may wish to approve the request of the Committee for extension of its meeting time, as contained in decision 39/I, in order to enable the Committee to discharge all its responsibilities in a timely and effective manner.**

Annex I

Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women: ratification and reporting status as at 15 August 2007

Year and session	*Ratifications by States*	*Reports submitted*	*States parties whose reports were considered*	*Reports considered*
1980	10	—	—	—
1981	21	—	—	—
1982 — first	11	7	—	—
1983 — second	8	12	7	7
1984 — third	11	5	6	6
1985 — fourth	20	4	5	5
1986 — fifth	7	16	8	8
1987 — sixth	3	19	8	8
1988 — seventh	1	12	13	13
1989 — eighth	5	11	9	9
1990 — ninth	4	13	12	12
1991 — tenth	7	17	10	10
1992 — eleventh	10	13	9	9
1993 — twelfth	11	12	11	12
1994 — thirteenth	8	12	15	17
1995 — fourteenth	13	7	10	11
1996 — fifteenth	3	17	9	9
1997 — sixteenth and seventeenth	7	19	18	23
1998 — eighteenth and nineteenth	2	23	16	18
1999 — twentieth and twenty-first	2	24	14	17
2000 — twenty-second and twenty-third	1	24	15	20
2001 — twenty-fourth and twenty-fifth	3	11	16	22
2002 — twenty-sixth, twenty-seventh and exceptional sessions	2	29	26	31
2003 — twenty-eighth and twenty-ninth	5	24	16	23
2004 — thirtieth and thirty-first	4	34	16	19
2005 — thirty-second and thirty-third	1	23	16	18
2006 — thirty-fourth, thirty-fifth and thirty-sixth	5	22	31	31
2007 — thirty-seventh, thirty-eighth and thirty-ninth[a]	1	14	38	41

[a] As at 15 August.

Annex II

Human rights treaty bodies: number of ratifications; number and duration of sessions per year as at 15 August 2007

Human rights instrument	*Number of ratifications*	*Treaty body*	*Number of sessions per year and approximate dates*	*Number of reports considered annually (average)*
Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (biennium 2006-2007)	185	Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women	Three, of three weeks each (in January, May and July/August), each preceded by a one-week pre-session working group of five members	31 (2006) 38 (2007) (includes parallel chambers)
Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women	88	Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women	Two, of three days each (in January and July)	
International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights	160	Human Rights Committee	Three, of three weeks each (April/May, July/August and October/November)	12
Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights	109	Human Rights Committee	Three one-week working groups, of at least five members	
International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights	156	Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights	Two, of three weeks each (April/May and November/December), each with a one-week pre-session working group of five members	10
International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination	173	Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination	Two, of three weeks each (February/March and July/August)	16-22
International Convention on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (declaration under article 14 — communications procedure)	47	Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination		
Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment	144	Committee against Torture	Two, of three weeks, respectively, with a one-week pre-session working group (April/May and November)	14

Human rights instrument	*Number of ratifications*	*Treaty body*	*Number of sessions per year and approximate dates*	*Number of reports considered annually (average)*
Convention on the Rights of the Child, and two Optional Protocols	193	Committee on the Rights of the Child	Three, of three weeks each (January, May and September), each with a one-week pre-session working group of the entire Committee	48 (2006) 30-42 (2007) (includes Optional Protocol reports and parallel chambers)
International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families	37	Committee on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families	One, of one week	1

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Sixty-second session
Item 110 of the provisional agenda*
Measures to eliminate international terrorism

Letter dated 15 August 2007 from the Permanent Representative of the Sudan to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to transmit to you herewith the final communiqué and recommendations of the Conference on Terrorism and Extremism that met in Khartoum on 24 and 25 July 2007 (see annex).

I should be grateful if you would have this letter and its annex circulated as a document of the General Assembly under the agenda item entitled "Measures to eliminate international terrorism".

(*Signed*) Abdalmahmood Abdalhaleem **Mohamad**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

* A/62/150.

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Annex to the letter dated 15 August 2007 from the Permanent Representative of the Sudan to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

In the name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate

Centre for the Study of Islam and the Modern World

Conference on Terrorism and Extremism

Final communiqué and recommendations

The Conference on Terrorism and Extremism, organized by the Centre for the Study of Islam and the Modern World, met in Khartoum on 24 and 25 July 2007. It was attended by a considerable number of politicians, thinkers, researchers, academics, resource persons and people of experience from the Sudan and abroad, and by the relevant official authorities.

A large volume of specialized documentation was submitted, prepared by thinkers and resource persons from many States and centres outside the Sudan, as well as by intellectuals, research workers, experts and people of experience from different backgrounds and of different political and intellectual allegiances. The participants in the Conference engaged in important deliberations addressing the intellectual roots of terrorism and extremism, the reasons for those phenomena and their economic, political and social impact. They also discussed examples of a variety of States around the world, their differing legislation and their approaches to terrorism and extremism. The participants also paid considerable attention to different kinds of terrorism, to the influence of moderation and restraint in reducing it, the influence of the media, the distinction between resistance and terrorism, and the relationship between religion and terrorism.

The documents and the related discussions, debates and interventions resulted in the following views and recommendations:

1. Terrorism must be given a specific definition; the different types of terrorism and its implications must be clarified, making the important distinction between terrorism and the right of resistance.

2. Our nation must gather its strength in every way; when Islam commands us to gather our strength, that does not mean engaging in the terrorism of others but rather implies self-defence and resistance to the terrorism of others.

3. A reconsideration of Islam and its vital and fundamental role in various walks of life is required. It is essential to re-establish the concept of revival based on innovation in all walks of life and to place emphasis on forming the Muslim individual who will assume the tasks of such revival.

4. One of the greatest dangers now facing our nation and our people is the "war of ideas" the aim of which is to weaken Islam; this requires a qualitative awareness and effort in which thinkers, people of culture, scholars and specialists must participate. Islamic discourse must be reconsidered, both internally and externally, together with the optimal use of our media for that purpose.

5. A closed or totalitarian political order is most likely to provoke opposition using the methods of terrorism as a means of bringing about change, particularly in the case of groups that are striving to redistribute power and wealth. Accordingly, the Conference recommends that efforts be made to establish open political regimes in which all can participate.

6. The only means of confronting terrorism is not to use force but to eradicate its causes without occupying the territory of others and without injustice, arbitrary action or dictatorship.

7. The participants in the Conference affirm that the waging of war by military or covert means weakens dialogue. Terrorism must be handled as a human phenomenon. Dialogue, and still more dialogue, between States is potentially an effective means of reducing terrorism, and thus of putting an end to it.

8. The media in general, and the religious media in particular, cannot be reformed without freedom and democracy. It is necessary to have an annual report on the religious media prepared by a number of centres and organizations and to organize workshops for media personnel working in the field of religion to discuss the issue of innovation in religious thought and related issues.

9. There is a pressing need to continue and revitalize the dialogue between Islam and Christianity and between Islam and the West with a view to ensuring cooperation between the parties in order to eradicate the phenomena of terrorism and extremism.

United Nations A/62/292

General Assembly

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Sixty-second session
Item 56 (h) of the provisional agenda*
Sustainable development

Sustainable mountain development**

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The present report was prepared in response to General Assembly resolution 60/198, in which the Assembly requested the Secretary-General to report to it at its sixty-second session on the status of sustainable development in mountain regions. The report describes the status of sustainable mountain development at the national, regional and international levels, including an overall analysis of the challenges ahead, and provides suggestions for consideration by the Assembly as to how to continue to promote effectively sustainable development in mountain regions around the world within the existing policy context, including chapter 13 of Agenda 21, the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation and the Millennium Development Goals.

* A/62/150.

** Submission of the report was delayed to incorporate latest information on activities in support of sustainable mountain development.

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I. Introduction

1. At its fifty-third session, the General Assembly adopted resolution 53/24, in which it proclaimed 2002 the International Year of Mountains. The resolution encouraged Governments, the United Nations system and all other actors to take advantage of the Year in order to increase awareness of the importance of sustainable mountain development. The achievements of the Year were reported to the General Assembly at its fifty-eighth session in a report transmitted by the Secretary-General (see A/58/134).

2. The International Year of Mountains built on chapter 13 of Agenda 21, which focuses on mountain issues, and was dedicated to protecting mountain ecosystems and improving the well-being of mountain people. As reported by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) in the report of the Secretary-General to the General Assembly at its fifty-eighth session, the International Year of Mountains acted as a catalyst for long-term, effective action to implement chapter 13, as intended. It achieved as much by raising awareness of the importance of mountains to life and the need to improve mountain environments and mountain people; supporting the establishment of 78 national committees for country-level action; and strengthening partnerships with stakeholders in mountain issues, which culminated in the launch of the Mountain Partnership at the World Summit on Sustainable Development (Johannesburg, South Africa, September 2002).

3. The Year also led to the adoption of resolution 57/245, in which the General Assembly designated 11 December as International Mountain Day, as from 2003, and encouraged the international community on that day to organize events at all levels to highlight the importance of sustainable mountain development. The General Committee recommended that the provision of development assistance to poor mountain countries should be included in the General Assembly's current agenda. It was also suggested that debt relief be considered as an important means of fighting poverty in these regions.

4. In its resolution 59/238, the General Assembly decided to consider, under the agenda item entitled "Sustainable development", a sub-item entitled "Rendering assistance to poor mountain countries to overcome obstacles in socio-economic and ecological areas" at its sixtieth session. FAO prepared a report entitled "Sustainable mountain development" (A/60/309) for the sixtieth session of the General Assembly.

5. The present report is submitted in compliance with General Assembly resolution 60/198, in which the Assembly requested the Secretary-General to report at its sixty-second session on the status of sustainable development in mountain regions, under item 56 (h) of the provisional agenda. It was prepared by FAO in collaboration with Governments, relevant agencies of the United Nations system and non-governmental organizations.

II. Background and challenges

6. There is now increasing awareness that mountains are fragile ecosystems that are globally important as the source of most of the Earth's freshwater, repositories of rich biological diversity, popular destinations for recreation and tourism and areas of important cultural diversity, knowledge and heritage. Covering about one quarter of the world's land surface, mountains provide a direct life-support base for about

12 per cent of the world population, as well as essential goods and services to more than half of humankind. Yet many of the world's most impoverished and food-insecure people live in mountain regions. Consequently, there is a need to ensure the ecological health and the economic and social improvement of mountain areas, for the sake of both mountain inhabitants and people living in lowland areas.

7. Awareness of the importance of mountain ecosystems and communities has increased since the adoption of chapter 13 of Agenda 21, entitled "Managing fragile ecosystems: sustainable mountain development", at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in 1992. Commitment and will were strengthened during the International Year of Mountains in 2002, and mountains have gained an increasingly high profile on agendas at the national, regional and international levels. The World Summit on Sustainable Development resulted in the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation, paragraph 42 of which describes actions required to address sustainable development of mountain regions; along with chapter 13 of Agenda 21, it serves as the overall policy framework for sustainable mountain development.

8. Despite increased recognition of mountain issues and tangible results, there are still significant constraints to alleviating poverty, averting environmental degradation and attaining sustainable development in mountain regions that is congruent with the Millennium Development Goals.

9. Five years on from the International Year of Mountains, the challenges remain. Mountain communities and their environments are still vulnerable to growing demands for water and other natural resources, expanding tourism, greater rates of out-migration, disproportionate incidences of conflict and the pressures of industry, mining and agriculture in an increasingly globalized world. At the same time, the threats and consequences of global climate change are providing new challenges for mountains and mountain people that require urgent attention and concerted efforts to resolve. There is a clear need for higher levels of funding and investment in mountain areas, enhanced coordination and collaboration, and a stronger enabling environment with more supportive laws, policies and institutions.

III. National action

10. Action at the country level is increasingly coordinated at the national level by multi-stakeholder groups with representation from Governments, international organizations and civil society groups. During the International Year of Mountains in 2002, 78 national committees were set up in Africa, Asia, Europe, Latin America and the Near East to create awareness of mountain issues, foster support and catalyse action at the national level. Some of these committees have evolved into more permanent bodies and coordination mechanisms.

11. As it is beyond the scope of the present report to describe the multitude of events, activities and initiatives undertaken by countries for the sustainable development of mountain regions, the following section provides selected examples and highlights of action at the national level.

A. Africa

12. In Kenya, the Ogiek Indigenous Community in the montane Mau forest complex are mapping their ancestral territories in efforts to preserve their cultural heritage, secure ancestral land, and manage their commonly shared natural resources. Traditional knowledge is being integrated with modern participatory geographic information system technologies and approaches to document and present their ancestral entitlements.

13. In the Lebialem Highlands of Cameroon, an innovative community-led and managed microfinancing mechanism has been created. Over 2,000 people have already been mobilized through the Community Fund for Rural Livelihoods to engage in beekeeping, wildlife domestication, livestock and tree crop farming. It is anticipated that this Fund will be scaled up to form the Cameroon Indigenous People's Fund for Conservation and Development.

14. The Democratic Republic of the Congo is striving to protect and rebuild environments after years of conflict. The country's National Environmental Action Plan highlights specific activities related to mountain development designed to reduce pressure on rainforest on the Guinea-Congo border, and rehabilitate and manage protected rainforest areas. Priority actions include a national mountain development strategy to favour populations and strengthen institutional and administrative capacity.

15. Ghana's national International Year of Mountains committee — composed of Government representatives and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) — has been tasked to draft a national strategy and action plan for sustainable mountain development with the support of the Ministry of Environment and Science. The country has also developed various alternative livelihood projects in mountain areas to create new income opportunities, minimize deforestation and deter out-migration from mountain areas.

B. Asia

16. The Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran has established a Subcommittee on Mountains in the Department of the Environment. The multi-stakeholder committee is comprised of representatives from relevant Government ministries, as well as intergovernmental agencies and NGOs such as the Mountain Environment Protection Society — the first environmental NGO in the country. One of the Subcommittee's first priorities is to devise an information system on the country's mountains.

17. In Kazakhstan, a multi-donor project is supporting efforts by mountain producers to reintroduce and benefit from a traditional handicraft — felting — as a way of sustainably using local resources to combat unemployment. This has involved training seminars on new product and design technologies and exchange visits between producers. In 2006, a regional trademark, Central Asian Mountain Product, was registered with assistance from the Central Asian Mountain Partnership Programme.

18. In Tajikistan, many areas in the Pamir Mountains are on the verge of environmental collapse: an estimated 90 per cent of forests have been cut as a fuel

source for rural communities. The Social Enterprise and Environmental Development System (SEEDS), which became the first ecologically based NGO in the country in 2007, is helping rural communities identify unused, misused, mismanaged or overlooked natural and human resources to encourage sustainable energy use, enterprise development and ecological stability.

19. The Government of Nepal has turned over conservation areas surrounding Kangchenjunga — the world's third highest mountain — to a coalition of local communities and institutions. This devolution of authority to the Kangchenjunga Conservation Area Management Council is an historic step in devolving power to local populations, especially with regard to the monitoring, management and use of natural resources and the equitable sharing of benefits.

C. Europe

20. In 2007, the Government of Romania adopted a law to establish the Romanian National Agency for Mountain Areas. Special offices devoted to mountain issues will be set up in the local departments of agriculture and rural development in the 28 counties with mountain areas. In this new structure, professional training centres will support the establishment of professional mountain farmers' organizations. The creation of this national body for mountains followed an intensive lobbying process by parliamentarians and civil society.

21. In Italy, the Code of Mountain Ethics is part of a project informing residents and tourists of environmental issues in the country's Valle d'Aosta region. Produced by the region, with support from the Government and the European Union, the code provides practical advice (in Italian, English and French) on mountain tourism, etiquette, safety and responsibility. It also contains strong messages on the principles of environmental sustainability.

22. In Turkey, the Government is working with partners such as the International Fund for Agricultural Development to boost employment and foster new businesses in the remote mountainous regions of Diyarbakir, Batman and Siirt provinces. The project supports new non-farming opportunities and expands existing profitable businesses by improving access to markets.

23. In France, the renovated Maison des parcs et de la montagne (House of Parks and Mountains) in the town of Chambéry in the French Alps is dedicated to promoting the development and protection of Alpine environments. It gathers under one roof key actors and organizations working towards sustainable mountain development in the European Alps and provides educational facilities for the public.

D. Latin America

24. Argentina has established a Government committee dedicated specifically to mountain development. Its creation was motivated by the extensive work undertaken on mountain issues by stakeholders in the country during the International Year of Mountains, as well as an intensive three-year collaborative process with key Government agencies and institutions. This new committee will coordinate future national initiatives to develop mountain regions and communities, with a particular focus on institution-building and resource mobilization.

25. Out-migration from mountains is a common phenomenon in many countries. This trend is being reversed, however, in Cuba through the Plan Turquino National Commission. This special programme for the island's mountainous areas promotes sustainable food production, supports organic products for export and reaps the maximum amount of timber, coffee, cacao and fruit with the minimum impact on mountain ecosystems. The Commission's wide-ranging activities to sustain and develop mountain communities and infrastructures have led to a sharp decrease in migration to the lowlands.

26. An important environmental initiative in Colombia is the recent creation of the non-profit Organization for Environmental Education and Protection. Its expeditions for young people teach them about social, cultural, historical and also environmental aspects of mountains as well as lowland regions. In addition, the Organization plans to support specific grass-roots programmes promoting sustainable development and community-based solutions to environmental problems.

27. In Peru, four mountain lakes in the Andes (Acopia, Pampamarca, Asnacocha and Pomacanchi) are being saved from severe environmental threats and deterioration. The Recovery of the Circuit of Four Lakes Partnership, composed of indigenous peoples, NGOs and local communities is cleaning the lakes and banks of waste, protecting biological diversity and assisting communities in preventing future contamination. In addition, the institutional setting for mountain development in Peru continues to be strengthened by the National Working Group on Mountain Ecosystems, which is implementing its strategic national plan entitled "The Peruvian Mountain Agenda: towards 2020".

E. North America

28. The Mountain Studies Institute aims to enhance the understanding and sustainable use of the San Juan Mountains in Colorado through research and education. An ongoing study and outreach campaign entitled "Air quality in the San Juan Mountain high country", is collecting data to determine the current risk posed by mercury deposition. Mercury was selected as the focus of the study because of concerns expressed by various stakeholders, including land managers, watershed groups, residents, elected officials, and health professionals.

29. During the past several decades, dozens of new and exotic plant species have invaded the Appalachian highlands in the United States of America, creating what some researchers describe as one of the most serious threats to ecosystems in the region. The Appalachian Highlands Invasive Species Project is developing a community-based research, education, and demonstration site at the Mountain Institute's Spruce Knob Mountain Center in West Virginia, to develop methods for the control of invasive plants and the restoration of native plants.

30. The Bow Valley Mountain Forum is a web portal serving several small mountain communities near Banff, in the Canadian province of Alberta. Launched in 2006, the portal focuses on community events, businesses and activities that affect economic, social and environmental sustainability in the region. Users build the site and post information themselves, free of charge, much like a large community bulletin board. The Bow Valley Mountain Forum is a programme of Mountain Culture at the Banff Centre.

IV. International initiatives

A. Mountain Partnership

31. The Mountain Partnership (originally known as the "International Partnership for Sustainable Development in Mountain Regions") is a multi-stakeholder, voluntary alliance dedicated to improving the well-being, livelihoods and opportunities of mountain people and protecting mountain environments around the world. Launched as a Type 2 outcome of the World Summit on Sustainable Development in September 2002, the Mountain Partnership provides a cohesive framework and platform in which to enhance collaboration in the implementation of both chapter 13 of Agenda 21 and the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation, which called for on-ground action at the policy, programme and project levels. As of August 2007, the Partnership has 143 members: 47 countries, 15 intergovernmental organizations and 81 major groups organizations (e.g., civil society, NGOs and the private sector).

32. The Mountain Partnership secretariat, hosted since 2003 by FAO and funded by the Governments of Italy and Switzerland, supports members' collaborative action, promotes knowledge management, brokerage functions and communication exchange. The secretariat also helps members identify and mobilize resources and investments for the sustainable development of mountains, by providing information on the availability of funds from all possible sources.

33. Members' collaborative activities, or "initiatives" are focused on thematic areas (presently including biodiversity, education, gender, policy and law, research, sustainable agriculture and rural development in mountains, sustainable livelihoods and watershed management) and geographic areas (presently including the Andes, Central America and the Caribbean, Central Asia, East Africa, Europe, and the Hindu-Kush Himalaya region).

34. During 2005-2007, members have joined together to work on further specific areas of interest in response to emerging issues and priority needs and concerns, including promoting high-quality, high value mountain products, evaluating microfinance opportunities for mountain areas, studying the potential of broadband communications to bridge the digital divide between highlands and lowlands and promoting twinning efforts between local authorities and mountain communities in the North and South for decentralized cooperation.

35. Collaboration within and for the Mountain Partnership is stimulated by a communications network which disseminates information, connects members, and promotes the exchange of experiences, skills and resources. Services and products include a multi-language website and monthly newsletter (in English, French and Spanish). Communication also focuses on encouraging dialogue and networking between members and in building electronic communities of practice and knowledge. These services are developed through online member and funding databases, a Mountain Calendar of Events and a series of thematic e-consultations, organized by the secretariat in close collaboration with the Mountain Forum.

36. The Mountain Partnership secretariat, through the invitation of the General Assembly in its resolution 60/198, presented a report entitled "The Mountain Partnership: activities and achievements" to the Commission on Sustainable Development at its fourteenth session (E/CN.17/2006/12). That report provided an

update on progress, achievements and challenges since the inception of the Mountain Partnership and recommendations for its future impact and effectiveness. Starting in 2007, the Mountain Partnership secretariat is decentralizing some of its core functions to regional hubs in efforts to better respond to the emerging needs of members, maximize existing networks and strengthen its collective action and impact worldwide.

B. Education

37. United Nations University is undertaking a range of initiatives to improve human livelihoods and protect fragile mountain ecosystems, with a particular focus on sustainable land management. In Central Asia, for example, three training courses acquainted experts with participatory methodologies for sustainable development appraisal, policy and institutional framework capacity assessment, and the use and management of geographic information systems (GIS) databases. The trained experts subsequently used these analytical tools to assess the scope and severity of land degradation at eight pilot sites in the Pamir-Alai mountains, and develop, jointly with local, national and international stakeholders, a strategy for addressing the problem through a four-year-long project entitled "Sustainable land management in the High Pamir and Pamir-Alai Mountains". This project, scheduled to begin in the second half of 2007, will receive financing from the Global Environment Facility (GEF) and other national and international partners.

38. The Centre for Development and Environment at the University of Berne, Switzerland, hosts the secretariat of World Overview of Conservation Approaches and Technologies — a network of Governments, national and international institutions and civil society organizations that aims to ensure that local soil and water conservation knowledge and experience, including that related to mountains, is shared and used globally. In late 2006, the World Overview of Conservation Approaches and Technologies published a global overview on soil and water conservation approaches entitled *Where the land is greener: case studies and analysis of soil and water conservation initiatives worldwide*, which also included policy recommendations for decision makers.

C. Gender

39. Mountain women face many of the same challenges that are faced by women throughout the developing world, but their work is intensified by altitude, steep terrain and isolation. Two landmark events held in 2002, a global conference on the theme "Celebrating mountain women" and the Bishkek Global Mountain Summit, highlighted gender inequalities and underlined the international community's commitment to pursue gender equity as a prerequisite for meaningful mountain development.

40. The Women of the Mountains Conference, held in Orem, Utah, United States, in March 2007, organized by Utah State University and the Utah-Russia Institute, built on this momentum and emphasized practical steps to ensure an improvement of women's status in mountain communities around the world. The adopted Orem Declaration of Mountain Women, underlines, inter alia, the need for collaboration with Brigham Young University (United States) in the collection and compilation of

data on women in mountainous areas, through further development of the WomanStats database, which will allow for improved analysis and understanding of the condition of women in mountains around the world and the development of interventions tailored to their specific needs.

41. The International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development, based in Nepal, advocates for mountain women's issues in Hindu-Kush Himalaya as well as influencing global strategies. Through various initiatives such as workshops, research and publications, the Centre aims to influence and frame mountain policies in making them gender sensitive and socially inclusive. The Centre also helps regional networks of grass-roots mountain women advocate for mountain women's rights and participate in decision-making processes.

D. Policy and law

42. Good policies are among the most important determinants of successful and sustainable mountain development. Unfortunately, few countries have developed specific policies to address mountain regions. Often, national Governments apply policies and laws created for lowland areas that do not take into account the fragility of mountain environments nor the singular needs, interests and priorities of mountain people.

43. The FAO Sustainable Agriculture and Rural Development in Mountain Regions Project aims to facilitate the design, implementation and evaluation of policies for sustainable agriculture and rural development in mountains. Its policy assessments in six mountainous regions (i.e., Andes, Carpathians, Central America, Hindu Kush Himalaya, Mediterranean region and South-East Europe) have studied the strengths and weaknesses of existing mountain policies, identified key principles for improved policy packages and processes, and prepared a practical guide for policy assessment.

44. Most countries have not yet adopted mountain-specific laws, preferring to focus on the protection and development of mountains through existing sectoral legislation. However, the 2006 FAO publication entitled *Mountains and the Law: emerging trends* looks at the steady development of mountain legislation in a few countries such as Algeria, Bulgaria, France, Georgia, Italy, Kyrgyzstan, Romania, the Russian Federation (Republic of North Ossetia-Alania), Switzerland and Ukraine.

E. Risks and hazards

45. Owing to their nature, mountain ecosystems and the people who live in or near them face greater risk from natural hazards — floods, droughts, volcanic eruptions, hurricanes, avalanches, debris flows, earthquakes and landslides. In recent years, a series of international initiatives have been taken to create awareness of risks, and reduce and manage their effects.

46. The International Consortium on Landslides leads a global, multidisciplinary programme on landslides. Supported by United Nations bodies, intergovernmental programmes, the Government of Japan and other governmental bodies, the Consortium fosters landslide research and capacity-building, integrates geosciences

and technology, and coordinates international expertise in risk assessment and mitigation studies. The Consortium has adopted the 2006 Tokyo Action Plan on the International Programme on Landslides, which foresees strengthening human resources and boosting funding to ensure adequate risk assessment and identify hazard zones.

47. The earthquake that devastated a vast area between Pakistan, India and Afghanistan in October 2005 killed over 80,000 people and left millions of mountain dwellers homeless. The Mountain Institute, Mountain Forum and the International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development launched an international appeal for tents for victims of the South Asia earthquake, which enabled the purchase and delivery of winterized tents and heaters.

F. Climate change

48. The implications of climate change for specific mountain ecosystems and regions are not well known and are under discussion. It is vital, however, to study and monitor the biological, physical and environmental health of mountains in efforts to better understand, manage and mitigate the negative effects of climate change. Many organizations around the world are working towards these goals through advocacy, research, education and action on the ground.

49. In North America, the Sierra Nevada Alliance promotes action for adaptation to climate change to protect environments and local economies. Its resource kit entitled *Sierra Climate Change Toolkit: Planning ahead to protect Sierra natural resources and communities* provides a range of scenarios and recommends specific actions. The United States-based Mountain Studies Institute has joined research teams around the globe in a long-term study of climate change impacts in fragile alpine ecosystems with the installation of a Global Observation Research Initiative in Alpine Environments (GLORIA) site high in the San Juan Mountains of Colorado, United States.

50. In Africa, recent droughts and floods have demonstrated the continent's vulnerability to climate variability and change. The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change African Regional Workshop on Adaptation, held in Accra, in September 2006, highlighted African concerns and identified concrete adaptation measures in the areas of agriculture and food security, water resources and natural ecosystems.

51. In Asia, the Himalayan glaciers provide a freshwater reserve affecting almost one third of humanity. But studies show that most Himalayan glaciers are receding at increasingly accelerated rates. The report entitled *The Impact of Climate Change on Himalayan Glaciers and Glacial Lakes*, produced by the International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development with the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), provides detailed case studies on the impact of warming temperatures on glaciers and glacial lakes, warns of the increasing likelihood of glacial lake outburst floods and calls for early warning and mitigation measures to avert disaster.

52. In Europe, the annual symposium of the International Commission for the Protection of the Alps, held in Bad Hindelang, Germany, in May 2006, focused on the growing threat to Alpine regions posed by natural hazards and the impact of

climate change on Alpine tourism. The resolution entitled "Climate protection and climate change adaptation strategies", adopted by the Commission, calls upon the European Union, the bodies of the Alpine Convention, the Alpine States and NGOs to intensify their climate protection efforts and draw up sustainable strategies to tackle the growing repercussions of climate change.

53. In the Swiss Alps, the Jungfrau-Aletsch-Bietschhorn (a United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization Natural World Heritage Site) is noted for the information it contains about ecological and biological processes, the formation of mountains and glaciers, and ongoing climate change. The Centre for Development and Environment at the University of Berne, Switzerland, leads the site's Management Centre which is developing a long-term research and monitoring concept.

54. Connectivity conservation is a viable means of managing and minimizing the effects of climate change in mountains. It involves creating systems of core protected areas that are functionally linked and buffered in ways that maintain ecosystem processes and allow species and populations to survive, move and adapt. The Papallacta Declaration adopted at the World Conservation Union (IUCN)/World Commission on Protected Areas workshop, held in Termas de Papallacta, Ecuador, in November 2006, pledges international commitment to engage in connectivity conservation in and around the mountain regions of the world.

G. Global change research

55. Global change research looks not only at climate change but also at the global issues that affect change in mountain populations and their environments, such as population growth and changes in economic systems. Significant steps have been made in recent years to further our understanding and knowledge of the causes and consequences of global change and generate collaborative efforts to address challenges at all levels.

56. The Mountain Research Initiative promotes and coordinates global change research in mountain regions. It conducts a scientific programme that detects signals of global environmental change in mountain environments, defines the consequences of global environmental change for mountain regions as well as the lowland systems dependent on mountain resources, and informs sustainable land, water, and resource management for mountain regions at local to regional scales. The Mountain Research Initiative convened the international Open Science Conference, held in Perth, Scotland, United Kingdom, in October 2005, the final event of the European Union-funded Global Change in Mountain Regions project, which communicated results between scientists from industrialized and developing countries and produced a long-term framework for research known as the Global Change in Mountain Regions Research Strategy.

57. The Mountain Research Initiative supports the regional networks who are implementing the GLOCHAMORE Research Strategy. In Latin America, the Initiative co-sponsored the conference on Climate Change: Organizing the Science for the American Cordillera, held in Mendoza, Argentina, in April 2006, which summarized current research and identified scientific gaps and needs to support adaptation to global change along the American Cordillera and created the American Cordillera Transect for Global Change Research, a network of scientists devoted to

cooperation and to optimizing science by data sharing and knowledge. In Africa, the Initiative and partners laid the foundations of a global change research network for African mountains at the workshop on the same theme, held in Kampala, in July 2007. In Europe, the Mountain Research Initiative and partners have lobbied successfully for the inclusion of mountains in the European Union's call for the Seventh Framework Programme for Research and Technological Development — the European Union's chief instrument for funding research over the 2007-2013 period.

H. Other research areas

58. The Mountain Invasion Research Network, launched in 2005, integrates surveys, monitoring and experimental research on plant invasions into mountains at a global scale. The Network's organization of researchers, managers and practitioners has defined a multifaceted approach to understand the increasing alien plant invasions into mountain ecosystems, facilitate communication and exchange of expertise, and provide management guidelines to address this urgent problem. The Network is associated with the global mountain research community and plans to strengthen cooperation in research initiatives in the future.

59. In the Himalayas, Ev-K²-CNR (Italian National Research Council) Committee oversees the Ev-K²-CNR Project which has become one of the main international cornerstones of high-altitude and remote-area scientific research. The Committee's ABC (Atmospheric Brown Clouds)-Pyramid station, at the base of the Nepali side of Mount Everest, is the highest atmospheric pollution monitoring station in the world. It performs thorough analysis of atmospheric composition at high altitude and investigates the circulation of pollutants and aerosols, their influence on oscillations in the monsoon cycle, and pressure on the atmospheric water and energy balance.

I. Biodiversity

60. The Convention on Biological Diversity work programme on mountain biodiversity, adopted at the seventh Conference of the Parties in 2004, aims to establish "regional and transboundary collaboration and the establishment of cooperative agreements" (see decision VII/27, annex). It also recommends strengthening collaboration with the Mountain Partnership and regional conventions on mountains for the conservation, sustainable use and the fair and equitable distribution of benefits. Since then, an increasing number of collaborative activities on biodiversity relevant to the Convention have taken place within the framework of the Mountain Partnership, in relation to the Andes, Carpathians, Balkans, Caucasus, European Alps and the Hindu-Kush Himalaya.

61. An example was the Gran Paradiso National Park and Sagarmantha National Park Twinning Programme Startup Workshop, held in Cogne, Italy, in October 2006, organized by Mountain Partnership members including the European Academy, the International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development and UNEP. At the event, representatives of Gran Paradiso, the oldest national park in Italy, launched a partnership with the Sagarmatha National Park in Nepal to explore future technical cooperation and the exchange of professional training and scientific knowledge. The adopted Cogne Declaration sets out areas of collaboration and acknowledges that

the Twinning Programme will be further developed within the framework of the Mountain Partnership. This landmark agreement between mountain parks in Italy and Nepal promises to serve as a model instrument for biodiversity management in their respective regions and beyond.

62. The Global Mountain Biodiversity Assessment of DIVERSITAS, an international programme of biodiversity sciences, contributes input to policy on the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity in mountain regions and coordinated the chapter on mountain ecosystems in the United Nations Millennium Ecosystem Assessment of 2005. The Global Mountain Biodiversity Assessment also encourages the global effort to mine geo-referenced archive databases on mountain organisms, build new biodiversity databases, and to link them with each other as well as with geophysical databases. It also coordinates a worldwide network of field experiments on land use and biodiversity in steep mountain terrain. Projects are already underway in the Bolivian Altiplano, Central Caucasus (Georgia), European Alps (Austria, France and Switzerland), and Himalayas (China).

J. Watershed management

63. One of the key challenges in attaining the Millennium Development Goals is controlling watershed degradation and the negative impacts of socio-economic change on mountain ecosystems. Recent initiatives are improving understanding and approaches to watershed management.

64. During 2002-2003, FAO and its partners undertook a large-scale assessment and global review of the current status and future trends of integrated and participatory watershed management. Experts from four continents contributed to the assessment through regional workshops in France, Kenya, Nepal, Peru, and an international conference in Italy. In 2006, FAO and collaborating institutions widely disseminated findings and a resource book entitled *The new generation of watershed management programmes and projects*, which provides a critical summary of the state of the art of watershed management, and outlines a new approach based on the principles of adapting, collaborative and results-oriented management.

65. The new approach to watershed management is currently being tested and applied in several FAO-assisted field programmes, including a major post-earthquake rehabilitation project in the mountain areas of Pakistan, a World Bank programme for strengthening watershed management in Tajikistan, and a Programme for Integrated Management of the Fouta Djallon Highlands (West Africa), supported by GEF. Interest in adopting the new approach has also been expressed by the Mekong River Commission and by the Governments of Ethiopia, Lesotho and the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya.

66. In addition, several policy initiatives have recently been implemented across regions as part of the global effort to revisit watershed management for sustainable mountain development. These include, inter alia: the adoption of the European Union Water Framework Directive by the International Network of Basin Organizations; the organization of the twenty-fifth session of the European Forestry Commission Working Party on the Management of Mountain Watersheds, in 2006, an electronic conference held by the Latin American Watershed Management Network (Red Latinoamericana de Manejo de Cuencas Hidrográficas); and the creation of a working party on mountain watersheds by the North American Forestry Commission.

V. Regional and interregional initiatives

67. Mountain ranges are often shared among several countries. However, as was highlighted during the International Year of Mountains and since, regional and subregional cooperation is often limited or hampered by national legislation. Innovative legal arrangements are essential for effective management of areas shared among two or more countries. Indeed, the report of the Secretary-General on the International Year of Mountains, 2002 (A/58/134) recommended strengthening regional and transboundary cooperation started before 2002 and supporting transboundary approaches to sustainable development of mountain ranges and information sharing. These efforts continue around the world.

68. The Alpine Convention is a treaty under international law between Austria, Switzerland, Germany, France, the Principality of Liechtenstein, Italy, the Principality of Monaco, Slovenia and the European Community. For the European Alps, the Alpine Convention and its protocols are the most significant basis for their preservation and international collaboration. The brochure, entitled *International Mountain Partnerships*, was prepared by Austria in its recent presidency of the Alpine Convention and provides an overview of the existing collaborative activities of the Convention's member countries with the Carpathians, Caucasus and Central Asia (Tian Shan, Pamir).

69. Eight partners from six Alpine countries (Austria, France, Germany, Italy, Slovenia, Switzerland) participate in the DIAMONT (Data Infrastructure for the Alps-Mountain Oriented Network Technology) project. This European Union-supported project aims to promote a common understanding of sustainable development in the Alpine space: it takes into account the expectations of experts for regional development, as well as the needs of the Alpine population and disseminates knowledge and data on the spatial, economic, social and natural structure of the Alps. It is hoped that the results of the project (ending in 2008) will supply methodologies adaptable to other European mountain areas and regions.

70. The Carpathian region which spans the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Romania, Serbia, Montenegro, Slovakia and Ukraine is not only one of Europe's largest mountain ranges but also contains Europe's greatest reserve of pristine forest and a wealth of biodiversity. The Carpathian Convention, an international treaty to conserve the wildlife, landscapes and cultural heritage of the Carpathian Mountains, entered into force on 4 January 2006. The Convention provides the legal framework for cooperation and multisectoral policy coordination, a platform for joint strategies for sustainable development and a forum for dialogue between all involved stakeholders in the region.

71. Importantly, the Carpathian Convention also provides a framework for several other partnerships in the region, inter alia, the Carpathian Network of Protected Areas, the Carpathians Environmental Outlook, the CADSES (Central, Adriatic, Dankbian and South-Eastern European Space) Carpathian Project (involving 19 public and private partners from eight countries), and the starting up of a Carpathian Research Initiative.

72. The First Meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Carpathian Convention, held in Kyiv, in December 2006, organized by the UNEP Vienna-Interim Secretariat of the Carpathian Convention, adopted rules of procedure and financial rules of the Convention, and its cooperation with other conventions and

international bodies. In particular, the meeting signalled the strengthening of cooperation between the Alps and the Carpathians, with the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding by their participating secretariats and presidencies. Specific areas of collaboration include spatial planning, air pollution control, waste management, cultural heritage and traditional knowledge.

73. The Carpathian model of regional cooperation holds valuable lessons for other transboundary mountain regions of the world. UNEP, which has played a key role in developing the Carpathian Convention, has received requests from mountain regions in the Balkans and Caucasus to support initiatives, collaborative mechanisms and cooperation inspired by its work on the Carpathians. For example, the first intergovernmental meeting for the preparation of a legal framework for the Protection and Sustainable Development of Mountain Regions in South-Eastern Europe "SEE (Balkan Region) Mountain Convention Process", held in Bolzano, Italy, in November 2006, organized by UNEP and the Italian Ministry of Environment and Territory, resulted in the South Eastern Europe Statement and the Caucasus Outcomes — both of which underline a shared commitment towards enhancing regional cooperation in these mountainous areas and in moving processes forward within the framework of the Mountain Partnership.

74. An important constraint to sustainable development in mountain areas has been the lack of empowerment of local authorities and mountain communities. Local Agenda 21 — originating at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development held in 1992 — recognizes that local governments, and the wider communities they represent, are ideally positioned to take the lead in achieving ecologically sustainable development through integrating environmental, social and economic goals on a local level. Efforts are under way within Central Asia to address these issues and share experiences beyond the region. The meeting on the role of local governance in sustainable development, held in Bishkek, in November 2005, organized by the Alliance of Central Asian Mountain Communities and the Central Asian Mountain Partnership, promoted cooperation and exchange of experiences of local governance among communities and institutions in the mountains of Central Asia, the Alps, the Caucasus, the Carpathians, and the Altai, and adopted the Bishkek Resolution for that purpose. In addition, the Regional Environmental Centre for the Caucasus has developed pilot projects for Sustainable Development of Mountain Regions of the Caucasus — Local Agenda 21. In August 2006, representatives of mountain villages from Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia and the Russian Federation met in the mountain village of Chiora in Georgia and established a transboundary network of mountain villages in the Caucasus.

75. In Europe, the European Association for Mountain Areas (Euromontana) works to ensure the continuation of sustainable and viable activities in European mountains through recognizing and rewarding the assets they offer society. Its European Charter for Mountain Quality Food Products, developed through a European Union research project, was officially launched in the European Parliament in Brussels in December 2005. The Charter aims to characterize, protect and promote mountain quality food products and so contribute to the sustainable development of Europe's mountain regions. As of August 2007, the Charter includes 66 signatories (from Governments to local cooperatives) from 11 countries.

76. The Italian Apennine mountain range has been endowed with a new protection and management instrument called the Apennine Convention (Convenzione degli

Appennini). The Convention — the first convention worldwide to focus fully on the role of protected areas — aims to protect biodiversity, foster mobility, promote tourism and reconcile energy needs with respect for the environment. The Convention was initiated by the Unione Nazionale Comuni Comunità Enti Montani, a national Italian institution representing the interests of mountain communities, districts and bodies.

77. The project entitled "Institutional Consolidation for the Coordinated and the Integrated Monitoring of Natural Resources towards Sustainable Development and Environmental Conservation in the Hindu-Kush-Karokoram-Himalaya Mountain Complex" is a regional initiative aimed at consolidating the institutional capacity for systemic planning and management of socio-ecosystems at the local, national and regional levels in the Hindu-Kush-Karokoram-Himalaya region. The project, supported by the Italian Cooperation, is implemented by the World Conservation Union (IUCN) and the International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development and has a special focus on three protected areas: Sagarmatha (Everest) National Park in Nepal, Central Karakoram National Park in Pakistan and Qomolongma Nature Preserve in Tibet Autonomous Region of China.

VI. Communications and networking

78. The General Assembly declared 11 December from 2003 onwards as International Mountain Day, and designated FAO as the lead agency to coordinate worldwide observance. This special United Nations Day serves to highlight the global importance of mountain ecosystems among a wide audience (the public, Governments, intergovernmental organizations, NGOs, United Nations bodies, the private sector and the media) and to promote action at all levels for meaningful change in the world's mountains and highlands.

79. Every International Mountain Day focuses on a specific theme that represents challenges and opportunities to mountain people and environments. In 2005, the theme of International Mountain Day was sustainable tourism ("Sustainable tourism for poverty alleviation in mountain areas") and underlined that one of the main challenges is to harness mountain tourism so that it benefits mountain people and their environments, while at the same time satisfying the desires of tourists. In 2006, the Day stressed the need to manage mountain biodiversity in a sustainable manner ("Managing Mountain Biodiversity for Better Lives") and called for partnerships at all levels to promote biodiversity management that would reduce poverty, improve livelihoods, and protect mountain environments. In 2007, the theme for International Mountain Day will focus on mountains and climate change.

80. The focus of observance of International Mountain Day is at country level, where a wide range of educational, advocacy and media activities take place. As the designated lead United Nations agency to coordinate observance of the Day, FAO develops a series of communication materials to highlight thematic issues, suggest ways in which countries can celebrate the Day and facilitate action. These communication materials are packaged in trilingual CD-ROM kits (in English, French and Spanish), disseminated to key partners and made available on a special dedicated website.

81. Mountain Forum is the only electronic network dedicated exclusively to mountains. Its membership of individuals, professionals and organizations from

over 130 countries promotes sustainable mountain development through information exchange and advocacy and plays an important role in collective efforts to connect mountain stakeholders and raise mountain issues high on political agendas. Its range of services and products include membership profiles, regional and thematic e-mail discussion lists, a calendar of events, an online library and a bulletin. During 2005-2007, the Mountain Forum global secretariat and its regional nodes coordinated a series of e-consultations for the Mountain Partnership on biodiversity conservation in the Hindu-Kush Himalaya, regional cooperation in biodiversity use between the Andes and Himalaya, and sustainable agriculture and rural development in mountains.

82. An information network has been set up that utilizes information and communication technologies (ICTs) to preserve Africa's wild heritage by supporting and linking conservation initiatives throughout the continent and building local capacity for conservation. The African Conservation Network is a partnership between the African Conservation Foundation and local partner organizations in Cameroon, Kenya, Somalia and Zambia, and provides a methodology for an innovative Web-based environmental information system which could be implemented elsewhere in the world with low set-up and maintenance costs.

83. Every year mountain people are displaced by large-scale development projects for roads, dams, and mines. *Mountains and Highlands — Tales of Resettlement*, brings together first-hand accounts by the displaced in Africa (Botswana, Kenya, Lesotho, Namibia, Zambia and Zimbabwe) and Asia (India and Pakistan). This collection is part of the Panos London Oral Testimony Series, which attempts to understand the resettlement process and its aftermath, by providing first-hand accounts from the resettled themselves, those with the most direct experience of forced relocation but with the least influence on policy.

84. *Mountain Research and Development* is the only peer-reviewed international journal that deals with research as well as development in mountain areas worldwide. During 2005-2007, the journal has presented cutting-edge contributions to such key issues as poverty in mountains, mountain biodiversity, cultural diversity, climate change, energy, and migration. It also plays an important role by giving authors from the South a voice and an opportunity to access, publish and review academic research, as about half of the contributions now originate from that part of the world.

VII. Funding and financial mechanisms

85. Funding for mountain development is still inadequate. This is despite the increasing awareness of the importance of mountains and the persistently high incidence of poverty, food insecurity and vulnerability of mountain populations, particularly in the developing world. Traditional funding sources and approaches are important, but these can fail to recognize and address the specificities of mountains and mountain people. There is also undoubted potential to tap newer, more innovative financial mechanisms for mountain development, such as debt-for-nature swaps, payment for environmental services and microfinance opportunities.

86. The Mountain Areas Conservancy Project in Pakistan, funded under the GEF Operational Programme on Mountain Ecosystems, is now in its sixth and final year of implementation. This community-based project aims to protect the rich biological

heritage of seven geographically distinct conservancy areas in the Karakorum, Western Himalayan and Hindu Kush mountain ranges in northern Pakistan and has resulted in significant changes in people's attitudes and practices.

87. Recent research shows that climate change will be even more pronounced in high-elevation mountain ranges. In 2007, GEF approved a grant of $9.9 million to finance two climate adaptation projects designed to help mountain communities in Ecuador and Peru to combat problems associated with glacial retreat in the tropical Andes and improve water management in Ecuador. Lessons learned from these projects will help generate a knowledge base to inform the design of future adaptation projects in developing countries.

88. In 2006, the Government of Jamaica demonstrated its commitment to preserving the island's mountain forest reserves and national parks by launching a multi-million dollar Forest Conservation Fund. The Fund will target the Cockpit Country Forest Reserve, the Blue and John Crow Mountains Forest Reserve and National Park, the inland portions of the Negril Protected Area, the forested areas of the Dolphin Head Mountains, as well as the Rio Minho, Rio Cobre and Black River Watersheds. The Fund is the result of a 2004 debt-for-nature swap agreement between the Nature Conservancy and the Governments of Jamaica and the United States, and will result in the cancelling of some US$ 16.5 million in Jamaican debt to the United States.

89. Payment for environmental services, which compensates local land users for environmental services, has increasingly been used to manage biodiversity in mountains in recent years. For example, the Regional Integrated Silvopastoral Approaches to Ecosystem Management Project, initiated by local NGOs and financed by GEF, uses payment for environmental services to encourage silvopastoral practices in degraded pastureland in the mountains of Colombia, Costa Rica and Nicaragua. Participating land users receive direct annual payments for the environmental services they generate. Initial results show that payment for environmental services has induced positive land use changes such as improved water quality and increased bird and ant species diversity.

90. The Aga Khan Agency for Microfinance combats poverty and economic exclusion in mountain communities through its First MicroFinanceBanks in Afghanistan, Pakistan and Tajikistan and a steadily increasing number of countries. These banks, formally regulated by the central bank of the countries in which they operate, direct their services to the poor and their micro- and small enterprises. The MicroFinanceBanks services include credit, savings, payment services, money transfers, microleasing, and microinsurance.

91. The Mountain Partnership secretariat is providing information about the availability of funds for mountain activities from all possible sources on an ongoing basis. Its searchable funding database on the Mountain Partnership website contains details on the various thematic and regional areas of mountain development supported by financial institutions, foundations, multilateral development banks and donor agencies around the world. The database is complemented by online resources and tools that offer tips, practical suggestions and guidelines for funding and proposal writing.

VIII. Recommendations

92. **There has been significant progress in sustainable mountain development around the world in recent years, ranging from greater awareness about the global importance of mountains, to the strengthening and creation of institutional arrangements at the national, regional and international levels and greater collaborative action by the international community to address specific mountain issues. Nevertheless, much remains to be done, especially in the planning, implementation and evaluation of programmes on the ground in mountain communities. The General Assembly, in its efforts to be fully consistent with chapter 13 of Agenda 21, the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation and the Millennium Development Goals, may wish to reiterate some of the possible courses of action for Governments, such as:**

(a) **Encourage the continuation of existing, or the further establishment of new national committees or similar institutional arrangements, bodies and mechanisms to strengthen intersectoral coordination and collaboration for sustainable development in mountain areas;**

(b) **Assist developing countries and countries with economies in transition to formulate and implement national strategies and programmes for sustainable mountain development, through bilateral, multilateral, and South/South channels of cooperation, as well as through non-traditional arrangements such as decentralized cooperation;**

(c) **Encourage greater engagement by civil society and the private sector in the development and implementation of programmes, projects and activities related to sustainable development in mountains;**

(d) **Support the collaborative efforts of the Mountain Partnership and encourage the involvement of relevant Government, civil society and private sector institutions at the national and regional level in this evolving voluntary alliance;**

(e) **Support the continued development and implementation of communication and advocacy programmes for sustainable mountain development at all levels, to build on the awareness-raising, momentum and networking promoted by the International Year of Mountains and the opportunities provided annually by United Nations International Mountain Day on 11 December;**

(f) **Support education, extension and capacity-building programmes, particularly among local mountain communities, to further sustainable mountain development at all levels;**

(g) **Enhance awareness of the effects of climate change, as well as risks and hazards, in mountain areas and develop adaptation measures, approaches and policies to mitigate and manage impacts;**

(h) **Foster the strengthening of the role of mountain women in planning and decision-making processes that affect their communities, cultures, livelihoods and environments;**

(i) **Promote increased levels of investment and funding for sustainable development in mountain regions at the global, regional, national and**

community levels, including through innovative financial mechanisms and approaches such as debt-for-nature swaps, payment for environmental services and microfinance opportunities;

(j) Ensure that indigenous cultures, traditions and knowledge are recognized in development policy and planning in mountain regions and that, in particular, indigenous communities are directly involved in decisions and actions affecting their lives;

(k) Promote initiatives for integrated transboundary cooperation as well as strategies and approaches for sustainable activities in mountain ranges, through mutually agreed arrangements by the countries concerned and through cooperation within and between mountain regions and their respective regional and subregional conventions;

(l) Support efforts undertaken at the global, regional and national levels to effectively integrate management considerations, including mountain biological diversity and watershed conservation, into comprehensive policy approaches for the sustainable development of mountain areas.

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Item 72 (b) of the provisional agenda*
Promotion and protection of human rights: human rights questions, including alternative approaches for improving the effective enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms

Strengthening the role of the United Nations in enhancing the effectiveness of the principle of periodic and genuine elections and the promotion of democratization

Report of the Secretary-General**

Summary

The present report describes the activities of the United Nations system in providing electoral support to Member States over the past two years. The United Nations continues, by mandate and experience, to promote the principle periodic and genuine elections at a time when it is high on the international agenda. The mandate of the Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs, the United Nations focal point for electoral assistance activities, is to ensure organizational coherence and political and technical consistency in all United Nations electoral activities. The focal point is supported in these functions by the Electoral Assistance Division, which is required to maintain a roster of electoral experts and the electoral institutional memory of the United Nations.

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** The present report was delayed owing to the need to reflect information provided by a variety of sources.

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In peacekeeping or post-conflict environments, assistance is generally provided through the electoral components of the missions of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations or through the special political missions managed by the Department of Political Affairs. The Electoral Assistance Division assists these missions in designing and staffing the electoral component and provides technical guidance, as required. The United Nations Development Programme increasingly helps countries develop national capacity for professional electoral management and frameworks for inclusive electoral participation over a sustained period. A growing number of United Nations departments, programmes and agencies are providing components of electoral assistance, as are intergovernmental organizations and numerous non-governmental actors.

United Nations electoral assistance is provided only at the request of a Member State or on the basis of a resolution of the Security Council or the General Assembly. Since 1992, the United Nations has received 406 requests from 107 Member States. During the reporting period, the United Nations provided electoral assistance to 43 Member States.

Over the years, a number of trends have emerged. Demand from Member States for electoral assistance continues to be high, and initial scepticism that such assistance might encroach on national sovereignty has gradually diminished. Requests to organize or observe elections have decreased substantially; technical advice and assistance to electoral authorities and other institutions is the norm. The complexity of requests, including for technological innovations, is increasing. A growing number of projects are focused on local elections, which can be technically and politically more complex, and more costly, than national elections. There is an increasing realization that building capacity to organize credible elections may require assistance over a sustained period. Finally, successful elections require credible and transparent technical operations as well as the commitment of political actors to creating the appropriate environment to ensure acceptance of results and government formation in a peaceful atmosphere.

In its years of experience in this field, the United Nations has developed practices that have proven effective. The Organization must continue, however, to adjust its practices to meet emerging trends and challenges. The present report presents a series of recommendations to ensure the continued strengthening of the role of the United Nations in supporting Member States to conduct credible, periodic and genuine elections.

I. Introduction

1. The present report has been prepared in conformity with General Assembly resolution 60/162 and covers electoral activities undertaken by the United Nations since the previous report on this subject (A/60/431).

2. When the United Nations began to provide electoral assistance, there was some scepticism that its efforts might encroach on national sovereignty or impose a single model of democracy. This concern has gradually diminished. Notably, there has never been an objection regarding interference in the internal affairs of a Member State.

3. Over the past 15 years the United Nations has assisted 107 Member States in the conduct of elections. The first request for United Nations electoral assistance was received in 1989. Several Member States have requested assistance more than once. As of August 2007, the United Nations had received 406 requests for electoral assistance. During the reporting period, the United Nations provided electoral assistance to 43 Member States. In 10 cases, assistance was based on a Security Council mandate. Selected examples of electoral assistance are listed in the annex to the present report.

4. The report underscores efforts to strengthen partnerships with others involved in electoral assistance. It identifies a number of trends and challenges to which the United Nations must respond in order to ensure the coherent and effective delivery of electoral assistance. It points to a number of resource issues that have an impact on the delivery of electoral assistance. Finally, it makes a series of recommendations for the improvement and strategic development of United Nations electoral assistance to Member States.

II. United Nations electoral assistance during the reporting period

A. Cooperation within the United Nations system

5. Increasingly, the efforts of the United Nations to assist Member States in conducting credible, periodic and genuine elections require a system-wide approach. The mandate of the Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs, the United Nations focal point for electoral assistance activities (hereafter the focal point), is to ensure organizational coherence and political and technical consistency in all United Nations electoral activities. The focal point is supported in these functions by the Electoral Assistance Division, which is required to maintain a roster of electoral experts and the Organization's electoral institutional memory.

6. In peacekeeping or post-conflict environments, assistance is generally provided through electoral components of field missions under the aegis of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations or through special political missions managed by the Department of Political Affairs. The Division assists with the design and staffing of the electoral component, the latter through its roster of electoral experts, with technical guidance as required. Such assistance, for example, is presently given to the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC) and the United Nations Assistance Mission for

Iraq (UNAMI). The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) helps countries develop national capacity for professional electoral management and frameworks for inclusive participation over a sustained period. Other United Nations departments, programmes and agencies are also involved in electoral assistance, including the United Nations Democracy Fund, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, the United Nations Volunteers programme and the United Nations Office of Project Services (UNOPS).

7. The current reporting period provided an opportunity to review and assess the mandate, functions and resources of the Electoral Assistance Division. In that regard, the Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) conducted an in-depth evaluation of the Division's work and made useful recommendations (E/AC.51/2007/2/Add.1), which the Division has begun to implement.

8. The Division has been restructured, at no cost, to better address today's needs and demands. It is now working to strengthen its strategic partnerships and to promote improved consultation among partners while increasing its capacity to advise on cross-cutting electoral policy issues, in particular those that would further conflict prevention objectives. Additionally, the Division has begun to focus on developing its unique institutional memory in order to share its knowledge and experience more effectively with Member States and partners. The Division will also play a more active role in advocating international standards in the provision of electoral assistance. As a corollary, the terms of reference of the Trust Fund for Electoral Observation have been revised in order to ensure consistency with the functions of the Division.

9. UNDP is the Organization's major implementing body for long-term electoral support outside the peacekeeping or post-conflict environment. It manages some 40 to 50 field-based electoral projects per year. Over the past several years, its approach has shifted to focus support on electoral cycles rather than specific elections. This allows for better advance planning and larger, multi-year assistance programmes that focus on electoral reform and capacity development. In addition to its field-based activities, UNDP continues to produce important analysis on election-related issues. In 2006, UNDP published the results of a "Global survey on the cost of registration and elections", the first comprehensive international analysis of election costs. By highlighting best practices in election management and administration, the survey offers valuable suggestions for reducing costs while maintaining the integrity of elections.

10. The United Nations Democracy Fund has received financial support from 30 Member States from all regions. Its Board specifically invited civil society organizations and United Nations entities to submit project proposals. The Board recommended 125 projects, of which 28 per cent were related to civic education, elections and political parties. This thematic area received the greatest amount of funding from the United Nations Democracy Fund. A total of 35 election-related projects were approved, all vetted by the Electoral Assistance Division and, as necessary, endorsed by the focal point.

11. OHCHR continues to provide advice on human rights aspects of elections. For example, the OHCHR subregional Centre for Human Rights and Democracy in Central Africa in Yaoundé, Cameroon, is supporting democratization processes in the 11 countries of the region. Most recently, the Centre organized a meeting of key

civil society organizations to discuss a plan of action for involving civil society in public sensitization campaigns regarding electoral rights. In Timor-Leste, OHCHR provides substantive and methodological support to the Human Rights and Transitional Justice Section of the United Nations Integrated Mission in Timor-Leste (UNMIT), including monitoring polling stations in order to ensure that vulnerable voters (those in detention, in hospitals and internally displaced persons) were able to vote. Such monitoring also helped to prevent recurrent cases of intimidation and other human rights violations.

12. The Department of Economic and Social Affairs is collaborating with seven institutional partners (including the Department of Political Affairs and UNDP) in maintaining and expanding ACE, The Electoral Knowledge Network (see http://aceproject.org) (formerly the Administration and Cost of Elections project).

13. The United Nations Volunteers programme provides critical staffing for electoral missions, often within very short time frames. In 2006 some 445 volunteers provided support to six electoral missions. As at 31 July 2007, a total of 576 volunteers were serving in seven electoral missions, five of which are continuing from 2006. United Nations volunteers are currently engaged in missions in the Comoros, Côte d'Ivoire, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Guinea, Haiti, Madagascar, Nepal, Sierra Leone, Timor-Leste and Togo.

14. The United Nations Office of Project Services (UNOPS) provides project support for electoral activities in partnership with the Department of Political Affairs, the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, UNDP and Member States. Prominent among these were UNOPS electoral support services in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Haiti and Iraq. UNOPS coordinated international electoral observers for the elections in the Democratic Republic of the Congo in July and October 2006. For the elections in Haiti in February 2006, UNOPS provided services to the Provisional Electoral Council, the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH) and the Organization of American States (OAS). Building on its earlier work in Iraq, UNOPS assisted the national electoral commission and the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) with the planning and implementation of logistics for the October 2006 referendum and December elections.

B. Cooperation with other organizations

15. The United Nations continues to establish and strengthen its relations with governmental, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations involved in electoral assistance. In this context, the Organization is often expected to contribute to the development and dissemination of electoral best practices. For example, the Secretary-General signed the Declaration of Principles for International Election Observation and the Code of Conduct for International Observers in October 2005. Since then, the Declaration has been endorsed by over 30 organizations, all of which have committed to the standards established in the Declaration for professional, impartial and effective observation. In order to build on and broaden support for the Declaration, the endorsing organizations plan to meet annually on a rotating basis, with OAS organizing the next meeting in November 2007.

16. In addition to its work with the European Union, OAS, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and others, the United Nations has

established an ongoing dialogue with the African Union, which has requested support as it develops its Electoral Unit.

17. The United Nations continues to work with partners on ACE: The Electoral Knowledge Network and the Building Resources in Democracy, Governance and Elections project, two electoral knowledge tools with global reach. The latter project is a modular training package for building electoral administration capacity. Originally developed in East Timor during 2001-2002, the project is a cooperative effort of the Australian Electoral Commission, the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance, IFES (formerly the International Foundation for Election Systems), the Electoral Assistance Division and UNDP. A new and expanded version of the project is currently being developed. It has been used to train electoral administrators worldwide. The ACE network provides web-based information on election administration and includes IFES, the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance, the Instituto Federal Electoral of Mexico, Elections Canada, UNDP, the Department of Economic and Social Affairs and the Electoral Institute of Southern Africa as partners. Most recently, the Electoral Assistance Division joined the partnership, formalizing its membership in March 2007. The ACE network is supported through contributions from its partners, the United Nations Democracy Fund and the European Commission.

18. The United Nations was a member of the steering committee for the planning and organization of the fourth Global Electoral Organization Conference, which took place in March 2007 in Washington, D.C., coordinated by IFES. The conference brought together electoral associations and experts from over 50 countries. Participants discussed a wide variety of issues, including electronic voting and the establishment of election management training centres.

C. Elections and gender

19. In recognition of the importance of gender equality in all aspects of public and political life, the United Nations continues to promote women's participation in elections as voters, candidates and administrators. Since 2006, the Department of Peacekeeping Operations has organized four national civil society consultations in order to enhance the role of women — in Burundi, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Haiti and Liberia. Based on these meetings, the Department and the Electoral Assistance Division are jointly preparing guidelines on enhancing the role of women in post-conflict electoral processes. The United Nations Democracy Fund, UNDP and the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) have sponsored a variety of projects. In Africa, for example, the United Nations Democracy Fund awarded UNIFEM and the InterPress Service a grant to improve press coverage of women candidates running for office in 11 African countries. For the 2007 elections in Timor-Leste, UNDP and UNIFEM carried out a project in support of women candidates.

20. The United Nations pays particular attention to gender balance in the staffing of its field missions; in some electoral components female staffing is higher than 50 per cent. The Chief Electoral Officer in two of the Organization's largest missions (UNAMI and the United Nations Mission in Nepal (UNMIN)) are female. The number of women on the electoral expert roster is currently 30 per cent, and efforts are under way to increase that number significantly.

III. Trends in electoral assistance

21. The experience gained over the past two years has highlighted several emerging trends in the field of electoral assistance. Several of these reflect changes in the nature of requests from Member States. Others relate to United Nations priorities, including gender mainstreaming and efforts to support political inclusiveness.

22. The United Nations continues to receive requests for assistance to local elections. The Organization has tended to respond positively to such requests, recognizing, among other things, that local elections help generate a broad base for national democracy. They are, however, more complex and costly than presidential and parliamentary elections, often diverting financial and political resources from national elections.

23. Electoral assistance is becoming more complex. Some Member States are considering the introduction of electronic voter registration, voting and results aggregation systems into their electoral processes. It is essential that such new systems match available national capacity, thus allowing for sustainability over time. The United Nations must continue to enhance its own advisory and technical capacity in order to assist Member States in these issues.

24. Over time, the types of assistance requested of the United Nations have evolved. The Organization now rarely observes elections whereas, in contrast, regional organizations tend to be increasing their activities in this area. Most United Nations assistance entails technical advice and capacity-building during an electoral period and within a longer-term development framework. The Organization has generally maintained the practice of not observing elections to which it is providing technical assistance, so as not to be in the position of evaluating its own efforts.

25. The United Nations has been asked in specific instances to certify the results of elections, most recently in Timor-Leste. This is a form of assistance provided by the Organization that should be examined and reviewed in the light of United Nations experience to date.

26. There is an increasing realization that building the capacity of national institutions so they can organize credible elections may require assistance over a sustained period.

27. Too often, the technical successes of elections are overshadowed by political discord or violence, especially after results are announced or during efforts to form a government. Particularly in post-conflict environments, the United Nations and others have often been called upon to assist national authorities in creating an appropriate post-electoral environment in order to ensure acceptance of results and government formation in a peaceful atmosphere.

IV. United Nations resources for electoral assistance

28. Given the continuing demand for electoral assistance and the increasing diversity and complexity of assistance, the need for appropriate human and financial resources has grown. OIOS recognized this trend in conducting its 2006 evaluation of the Electoral Assistance Division. In its 2007 report, OIOS made two specific recommendations related to the Division's resources: the roster of electoral experts

should be converted to an electronic format for easier use; and the guidelines of the Trust Fund for Electoral Observation should be reviewed and revised to better match the Division's activities.

29. Regarding human resources, the roster of electoral experts is the primary source of expertise for staffing electoral missions carried out by the Department of Political Affairs, the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and UNDP. In the last two years, over 600 elections experts from more than 35 countries were drawn from the roster to staff electoral missions or projects. The roster contains the names of approximately 1,200 individuals with a range of expertise that includes election administration, electoral law, electoral systems, logistics, voter education, training, boundary definition, information technology and voter registration. Efforts continue to increase the roster's gender balance, geographical representation and language capabilities.

30. In May 2007, following the recommendations of OIOS, the Electoral Division undertook a comprehensive assessment of the roster and sought options for its conversion to a computerized system. Recommendations are now under consideration. In the long term, the conversion will increase efficiency, facilitate the roster's expansion and decrease the time between the selection of experts and deployment. This process, which will increase the complexity of work for the managers of the roster, will require additional staff.

31. Regarding financial resources, the United Nations system has several sources of extrabudgetary funding for electoral assistance activities, which is critical for their effectiveness given that the timing, duration and complexity of requests are often unpredictable. The primary sources of funding within the United Nations system have been the United Nations Trust Fund for Electoral Observation and the UNDP Democratic Governance Thematic Trust Fund. The newest source of financial support is the United Nations Democracy Fund. The costs of electoral components of peacekeeping missions are covered by assessed contributions for the particular missions. The majority of resources for UNDP electoral assistance projects are mobilized from donors and government cost-sharing at the country level.

32. The United Nations Trust Fund for Electoral Observation was established by the Secretary-General in response to General Assembly resolution 46/137. Its terms of reference reflected the primary activities of the Electoral Assistance Division at that time, focusing primarily on the need for funds to cover the costs of electoral verification missions and coordination and support for other international observers. Over the past 15 years, however, the nature of requests for electoral assistance has changed considerably, and the United Nations, as noted earlier, now rarely undertakes election observation.

33. In keeping with the changes in demands from Member States, OIOS recommended that the Fund's terms of reference be reviewed. As a result, the Secretary-General approved the revision of both the title and terms of reference of the Fund, which is now the United Nations Trust Fund for Electoral Assistance. The Fund will continue to be administered by the Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs in his capacity as the focal point. As in the past, the Fund will consist of voluntary contributions with no financial implications for the regular budget.

34. The Fund is currently close to depletion, and Member States are called on to consider making contributions, which may be earmarked, if required. Improved donor relations and resource mobilization have been identified as important activities of the restructured Division and will be coordinated with the overall strategy for donor relations of the Department of Political Affairs.

35. The UNDP Democratic Governance Thematic Trust Fund is one of the primary sources for funding for UNDP electoral assistance activities. In shifting its focus from election event to electoral process and management support, UNDP is now able to undertake multi-year planning rather than mobilizing funds for specific election activities. The trust fund has been useful primarily in helping UNDP country offices to undertake projects related to specific issues such as the role of women in electoral and political processes, political party support and enhancing participation of vulnerable groups.

36. The United Nations Democracy Fund, the newest source of funding for electoral assistance activities, first distributed grants in 2006. Since the Fund's Board sought to identify project activities not already supported by other funding sources, special efforts were made to solicit proposals from locally based civil society organizations and the United Nations system. The Fund is a modest but accessible source of funding for innovative interventions in electoral assistance.

V. Conclusions and recommendations

37. As evidenced by the continuing high demand, the United Nations has developed practices over the years that have proven effective in assisting Member States to conduct credible, periodic and genuine elections. The Organization must, however, continue to make adjustments in its practices in order to meet emerging trends and challenges.

38. The multiplicity of actors within the United Nations can enhance effectiveness through application of comparative advantages and increased specialization. However, it means more attention must be paid to system-wide coherence and consistency. In this regard the role of the focal point for electoral assistance activities should be re-emphasized. At the same time, efforts to define the division of labour within the United Nations family more clearly should be continued.

39. To meet the growing demand for complex electoral assistance, the United Nations should increase its capacity both to develop and disseminate electoral standards and best practices and to ensure that its knowledge management systems are sufficient to meet that demand. In so doing, the Organization should continue to work in partnership with relevant governmental and intergovernmental organizations and other partners. The focal point will endeavour to ensure that technical and policy advice is consistent throughout the Organization. Improved monitoring and evaluation of electoral assistance will further hone the service provided to Member States and should form a fundamental part of the response to requests for assistance.

40. It is often unrealistic, especially in post-conflict environments, to expect that effective and independent electoral institutions and inclusive electoral processes can be built on the basis of assistance to one election. A cyclical approach to electoral assistance will help ensure sustainability. The success of this approach also depends,

to some extent, on donors maintaining interest in electoral assistance through local elections and between elections, recognizing of course that the primary responsibility for funding and supporting electoral institutions and processes lies with the Member State itself.

41. The United Nations is often, especially in line with Security Council mandates, called upon to deliver electoral assistance in the context of tight time frames and difficult logistical circumstances. However, not all of the Organization's procedures are designed for the necessary speed and flexibility. The focal point will, in consultation with relevant departments and agencies of the United Nations, make recommendations as to how best to meet these challenges, within the framework of ongoing reform efforts.

42. Recognizing the recent trend of requests for the United Nations to certify the results of elections, the focal point will undertake, with relevant departments and agencies, a lessons learned exercise on how this mandate can best be implemented.

43. The Organization must continue to define support to programmes that encourage participation of women in electoral processes as a priority. It must also strengthen its capacity to offer Member States advice on the choice of electoral systems, which can be particularly important in encouraging inclusiveness in post-conflict settings.

44. The need for appropriate human and financial resources will grow with continuing demand and increasing complexity of electoral assistance. The roster of electoral experts is now being converted to an electronic format in order to enhance its accessibility and diversity. As the number of experts increase in the roster, additional human resources will be needed to maintain it. The terms of reference for the Trust Fund for Electoral Assistance have now been revised to better match the activities of the Electoral Assistance Division, in accordance with the recommendations of OIOS. However, since the Fund continues to be funded from voluntary contributions, and is currently close to depletion, I encourage Member States to consider making voluntary contributions for electoral assistance, which can be earmarked, to the Trust Fund for Electoral Assistance, the Democratic Governance Thematic Trust Fund and the United Nations Democracy Fund.

45. Finally, it should be recognized that successful elections require not just credible and transparent technical operations, but also responsibility on the part of political participants. Too often, the technical successes of elections are overshadowed by political discord or violence, especially after results are announced or during efforts to form government. I hope to work with Member States to address these challenges in order to help ensure that the promise of genuine and periodic elections can be fully realized.

Annex

Examples of United Nations electoral assistance during reporting period

Special political missions

Iraq

1. In 2005 the United Nations provided substantial operational and technical assistance to the Iraq election commission in the conduct of three election events. A new permanent electoral commission, the Independent High Electoral Commission, was appointed in early 2007. The Commission requested continued United Nations technical support in May 2007. The Organization leads the International Electoral Assistance Team, which currently includes partner organizations such as the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS), IFES and an Italian non-governmental organization, *Scuola Superiore Sant'Anna*. The team is the interface for all election assistance to the Commission, with the United Nations taking the lead on election policy, legal reform and capacity-building.

Nepal

2. The United Nations Mission in Nepal (UNMIN) was established as a special political mission of the Department of Political Affairs in early 2007. The mission is mandated, inter alia, to provide technical support for the conduct of the election for a constituent assembly and to provide a small team of electoral experts to monitor and certify the electoral process. The Electoral Assistance Division is supporting the operations of the Electoral Assistance Office at UNMIN. Electoral expertise has focused on assisting development of the legal framework and procedures, as well as voter education, updating of the voter rolls and logistics. Elections, originally scheduled for June 2007, are now scheduled to take place in November 2007.

The occupied Palestinian territory

3. Since 2005 a technical adviser on elections has been embedded in the Office of the United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process to assist and advise the Palestinian Central Election Commission. A United Nations Liaison and Support Unit was established with contributions from bilateral donors for the Palestinian legislative elections of January 2006. The Unit disseminated electoral information and provided liaison, exclusively for accreditation purposes, between international observers, the Palestinian Central Election Commission and the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The Unit did not observe the electoral process, but facilitated accreditation of 78 delegations consisting of 1,065 observers from 38 countries.

Peacekeeping operations

Afghanistan

4. Parliamentary elections held in Afghanistan in 2005 completed the first cycle of elections under the 2004 Constitution. As part of the integrated United Nations

Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) led by the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, UNDP currently assists the Government in strengthening electoral capacity. The Afghanistan Compact calls for the Afghan Independent Electoral Commission to be able to administer elections by the end of 2008. However, resources are unavailable to sustain the mid- to long-term capacity of the electoral institutions. The next elections in Afghanistan are scheduled for 2009. Aside from capacity-building, UNDP is also undertaking a pilot project to create a civil-voter register using funds provided by the United Nations Democracy Fund.

Democratic Republic of the Congo

5. The United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC) was mandated to assist with the preparation and conduct of elections during the transitional period. The MONUC Electoral Division, in close cooperation with the UNDP-managed *Project d'appui au processus electoral en République Democratique du Congo* (APEC), undertook the largest electoral assistance programme ever conducted by the United Nations. The Electoral Assistance Division supported the MONUC Electoral Division with operational planning for the July and October 2006 elections. The integrated MONUC/APEC technical assistance team worked directly with the Congolese Independent Electoral Commission.

6. In December 2005, the Independent Electoral Commission organized the constitutional referendum, after which a new constitution was promulgated. Following this, the Commission held the first round of presidential and National Assembly elections in July 2006. A second round of presidential elections, held in October 2006, was praised by international observers, the press and several world leaders. MONUC continued to support the Commission during the senatorial elections in January 2007 and the elections for governor and vice-governor in February 2007. MONUC will maintain its assistance during preparations for local elections, anticipated in 2008, and will contribute towards the creation of a new election commission.

Haiti

7. Mandated by the Security Council, the Electoral Assistance Division supported electoral processes in Haiti through the Electoral Assistance Section of the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH), established in coordination with UNDP. Logistical and technical assistance was provided to the Haitian authorities for the presidential and legislative elections in February and April 2006 and for the municipal and local elections in December 2006 and April 2007. Support continues to be provided for the senatorial elections due in November 2007. After consultations with its partners, including the Organization of American States (OAS), the Electoral Assistance Division has proposed a gradual transition to long-term country support, with the maintenance of a smaller MINUSTAH electoral unit, in order to focus on constitutional and electoral law reform.

Liberia

8. The Electoral Division of the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) closed officially in September 2006 and handed over its responsibilities to UNDP. The residual UNMIL Electoral Division assisted the Liberian National Elections

Commission with the conduct of by-elections, capacity-building and institutional restructuring of the election commission. A joint mission from the Electoral Assistance Division and UNDP visited Liberia in mid-February 2007. The mission recommended that UNDP develop a project of assistance that focuses on continued capacity-building of the Elections Commission. The Mission also recommended that UNDP assistance focus on both local and national elections scheduled for 2011.

Sierra Leone

9. The United Nations provided policy, technical and financial support for the August 2007 presidential and parliamentary elections, and helped to build the capacity of the National Electoral Commission. A successful voter registration process resulted in the registration of some 2.8 million voters, or approximately 91 per cent of the eligible voting population. Voter turnout for the elections was high, and initial observer reports suggest that the elections, organized by the National Electoral Commission with United Nations technical assistance, were conducted satisfactorily.

Sudan

10. Although national elections are scheduled for the end of 2009, the electoral calendar has been significantly delayed. Several key activities are yet to commence, including a population census, adoption of the elections law and the establishment of the Electoral Commission. The United Nations Mission in the Sudan (UNMIS) has a small electoral unit that works closely with the parties to create necessary political space and move the electoral process forward.

Timor-Leste

11. Presidential elections took place in April and May 2007, and parliamentary elections in June 2007. The United Nations Integrated Mission in Timor-Leste (UNMIT), through its Electoral Assistance Office, provided key legal advice and support for the drafting of electoral regulations, procedures and codes of conduct. UNMIT support, and that provided under the UNDP electoral assistance project, was also essential to assist the National Electoral Commission in accomplishing its mandate of supervising the electoral process. UNMIT police provided security for all phases of the electoral process and monitored the delivery and storage of ballots until the final count was calculated. The electoral activities were supported by the participation of 250 United Nations volunteers. Some 2,400 domestic observers and 489 international observers hailed the electoral process as peaceful, orderly and credible. UNMIT continues to provide advice on establishing the archives and capacity-building activities of the National Electoral Commission over the short- and medium-term period.

Highlights of electoral assistance provided by the United Nations Development Programme

12. UNDP assistance aims to ensure that countries have the ability to organize future elections with little or no external help. It can take myriad forms, helping electoral authorities prepare for the conduct of a specific electoral event, supporting civic and voter education programmes, building the long-term capacity of

institutions as diverse as the media or police forces and providing capacity-building support to political parties. Increasingly, a good deal of technical assistance is also targeted at electoral management bodies in the inter-election period.

Cambodia

13. UNDP is implementing a project on strengthening democracy and electoral processes in Cambodia following previous electoral assistance to Cambodia. The project addresses the inter-election period, 2003 to 2007, in preparation for the 2007 elections for the Commune Council and the 2008 elections for the National Assembly. The project focuses on capacity-building of the election commission, enhancing the legal framework and promoting civic engagement.

Malawi

14. UNDP assisted in the multi-party democratic parliamentary and presidential elections conducted in May 2004. In 2005, UNDP launched a project intended to provide long-term technical assistance to the Malawi Electoral Commission for the management and implementation of elections and electoral reform. The project is designed to build the institutional capacity of the Commission to hold credible local government elections in 2006 and general elections in 2009.

Mauritania

15. The Electoral Assistance Division and UNDP established an Electoral Assistance secretariat to assist with a referendum on constitutional revision (June 2006), legislative and local elections (November 2006), senatorial elections (January 2007) and two rounds of presidential elections (March 2007). Joint missions by the Department of Political Affairs, the Electoral Assistance Division and UNDP were dispatched to the country prior, during and after the elections in order to assess the country's needs in the field of elections and the quality of United Nations assistance for the entire electoral cycle.

United Republic of Tanzania

16. Following a project to support the 2005 national elections in the United Republic of Tanzania, UNDP has begun to implement a comprehensive "deepening democracy" programme, which supports greater involvement of civil society, political parties and the media in electoral processes and institutions.

Yemen

17. From 2004 to 2006, UNDP implemented a capacity-building project for the Supreme Commission for Elections and Referendum and provided support for the presidential and local council elections in 2006. This was the second phase of the long-term support provided by UNDP to the electoral management body.